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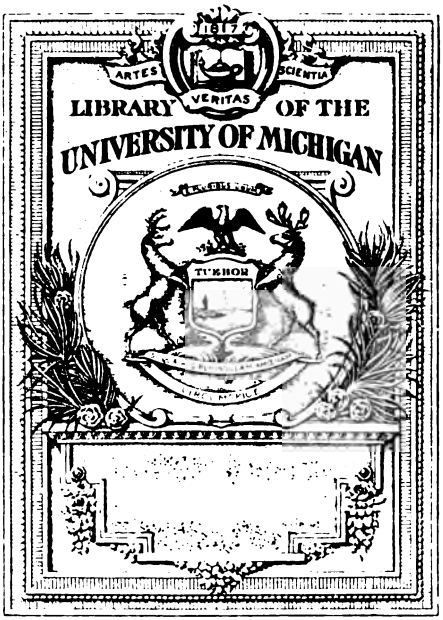
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THE

# WORKS

OF THE

1764-1831

# REV. ROBERT HALL, A.M.

WITH

A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE, BY DR. GREGORY; REMINISCENCES, BY JOHN GREENE, ESQ.; AND HIS CHARACTER AS A PREACHER, BY THE REV. JOHN FOSTER.

PUBLISHED UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF

OLINTHUS GREGORY, LL.D., F.R.A.S.,

PROFESSOR OF MATHEMATICS IN THE ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY;

AND

JOSEPH BELCHER, D.D.

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# PREFACE.

On the death of an individual so admired and revered as Mr. Hall, nothing was more natural than that a desire to possess a complete collection of his Works should be extensively felt, and almost as extensively expressed; the admirable genius and excellent spirit which pervade his compositions, as well as the singularly beautiful language in which his sentiments are generally conveyed, giving to them a very unusual fitness to instruct and impress the minds of men.

After a few conversations of a select number of Mr. Hall's intimate friends, it was resolved that a complete edition should be prepared as soon as possible; partly as a proper mark of respect for so distinguished a writer; partly, as conducive to the comfort of his family; and, partly, with a view to meet the desire so strongly felt and declared, as well as to give the utmost possible universality and permanency to the benefits which were likely to accrue from a correct and uniform edition.

The intimate friendship which had very long subsisted between Mr. Hall and myself, and the unreserved frankness with which it was well known he often spoke to me of some of his productions, and the plans which he had formed as to the orderly republication of the chief of them, led his family and many of his friends to express a most earnest wish that I would undertake the superintendence of the proposed Work. And although an almost entire want of leisure from heavy official and other engagements strongly induced me to decline the undertaking, yet the matter was so urgently pressed upon me, and every argument employed received so powerful an accession from my sincere veneration and affection for Mr. Hall, and my cordial esteem and regard for his excellent widow, that I could not withhold my assent.

My reluctance was greatly diminished on finding that, in the preparation and arrangement of the volumes, I could, in every case where such aid seemed expedient, avail myself of the valuable judgment of Mr. Foster, and of another friend, the

Rev. W. Anderson. This I have done throughout, with only two important exceptions: the one, that of a Letter on the Serampore Mission, in vol. ii.; the other, that of the very imperfect biographical memoir which appears in the present volume, and which, from want of time, could not be subjected to their judgment.

With regard to such of Mr. Hall's writings as had been previously published, either under his own name or anonymously, it was at once found that no principle of selection could be satisfactorily adopted, and that, indeed, nothing could be omitted without making ourselves responsible for all that should be retained. Besides, "if the works of departed genius are to be submitted to the censorship of a timid discretion, or the mistaken delicacy of friendship," and some suppressed, some mutilated, some softened down, who can say how far their influence may be impaired? If, for example, Mr. Hall's political writings had been suppressed, out of deference to those whose opinions were different from his; must we not, upon the same principle of omission, have suppressed his fine defence of Catholic communion, out of deference to the strict-communion Baptists; his defence of the Puritans, or of the evangelical clergy, out of deference to those who dislike both those classes of excellent men? And if so, why should we not have also suppressed his admirable arguments in support of orthodox Christianity, out of deference to those who maintain heterodox sentiments; and all his noble declamation, his bold invective, his spirited irony, his strong reprehension of wickedness and folly, out of deference to those who think "strong language always unbecoming," and would wish the public instructer to take off the edge of his well-meant reproof by some carefully studied, unmeaning attenuation? as though the ardent phraseology of one who thought intensely, and therefore expressed himself strongly, upon *every* subject which he deemed worthy of occupying his time and attention, would, by cooling it down, to meet the taste of men of lower temperament, make a deeper impression, or be productive of more lasting good. The editors of the works of Mr. Burke, or Bishop Horsley, have not ventured to trifle with the reputation of those extraordinary men, by the interspersion of such *lacunæ*, to meet the variable tastes of their readers; nor have we: for thus might the works of our inimitable friend have been reduced to a mere pamphlet, and a future age have derived no more benefit from an intellect so richly endowed, so admirably directed as his to the best and highest purposes, than if it had never existed.

Finding, therefore, no ground for any reasonable, practicable rule of selection, none has been adopted. The only article

omitted is a letter published by Mr. Hall in a newspaper nearly forty years since; and that, because, on his subsequent reconciliation to the individual addressed, both parties agreed, in the presence of their mutual friends, that all should be cast into oblivion that had been previously said or written by either in reference to the points of controversy.

In selecting from Mr. Hall's manuscripts, we have not referred to his morbid sensitiveness with regard to appearing before the world, as the rule of action. But, while we have kept his high reputation in mind, we have also had in view the religious instruction of the general reader.

The following is a summary of the contents and distribution of these Works.

Vol. I.—Sermons, Charges, and Circular Letters, including a sermon on Isaiah liii. 8, not before published, Tracts on Terms of Communion, and John's Baptism.

Vol. II.—Tracts, Political and Miscellaneous, including an unpublished Fragment of a Defence of Village Preaching, Reviews, and Miscellaneous Pieces, including several not before published.

Vol. III.—Notes of Sermons from the Author's own Manuscripts, with a Selection from his Letters, the originals of which have been kindly transmitted by various friends, and Twenty-one Sermons, preached by Mr. Hall, on various occasions, and communicated by friends who were in the habit of taking down his discourses. These are preceded by a brief Memoir of Mr. Hall's Life by the Editor; and Observations on his Character as a Preacher, by Mr. Foster.

The Sermons published in this volume, although given in different degrees of fulness, may unquestionably be regarded as presenting a more exact idea of the usual manner and substance of Mr. Hall's preaching, than those which were laid before the world by himself. In all, the design, the argument, and the spirit have been admirably preserved; while in most the very language is so nearly caught, that it requires not a strong exercise of imagination to recall the tones, whether solemn and pathetic, or rapid and impressive, with which it was actually delivered. I know not whether Mrs. Hall or the public will be under the deepest obligation to the gentlemen who have thus richly contributed to the value of the Works.

I must now refer to that of which I should most gladly have been spared the necessity of speaking—the Biographical Memoir of Mr. Hall.

Immediately after the publication of the Works was decided upon, I suggested the expediency of soliciting Sir James Mackintosh, whose talents, judgment, taste, and delicacy, as well as

his known attachment to Mr. Hall, gave him a peculiar fitness for the task, to undertake a sketch of the literary and intellectual character of his deceased friend. The letter which I received in reply to my application will show how promptly and cordially he acceded to our wishes.

GREAT CUMBERLAND-STREET,
*7th March*, 1831.

MY DEAR SIR,

"A great man is fallen in Israel." I have reflected much on the subject of your letter, and will frankly tell you what seems to me to be right. I consider myself as speaking confidentially, in all that I say, to the friend of my ancient friend.

* * * * * * * *
* * * * * * * *

The only point on which I am likely to differ from you is respecting your own fitness to write a Memoir. I shall say no more than that, if I had the selection, I should certainly choose you.

I should be glad to see you here to breakfast on Monday next. In the mean time I may say that I approve of your plan of publishing Hall's Sermons, and, if possible, all his writings. If your want of leisure absolutely prevents you from undertaking the task, and if it be thought likely to promote the interests of Hall's family, I do not think myself at liberty to withhold the contribution of a preface to the editor chosen by the family. In that case I should require a few names and dates, and a perusal of his writings published or unpublished. I own to you that I prefer the old custom of prefixing such a modest preface by way of memoir, to the modern practice of writing huge narratives of lives in which there are no events; which seems to me a tasteless parade, and a sure way of transmitting nothing to posterity.

My paper would chiefly contain the recollections of my youth, and the result of such observations on Hall's writings as a careful perusal of them might naturally suggest.

I am, my dear sir, with real esteem,
Yours very faithfully,
J. MACKINTOSH.

After the interview proposed in this letter, and two or three others which shortly followed, Sir James, having matured his plan, agreed to devote about twenty pages to the purely biographical part of the Memoir, and perhaps forty more to the critical estimate of Mr. Hall's writings, of his literary attainments, and his intellectual powers. But the pressure of his constant attendance in Parliament during the progress of the Reform Bills, and of his heavy occupations as chairman of the Committee on East India Affairs, compelled him to postpone this labour from time to time, until his much-lamented death, in May last, terminated his intentions, and our hopes and expectations.

Proportioned to Sir James's remarkable qualifications for giving a critical estimate of Mr. Hall's writings, and a philo

sophical view of the development of his intellectual character, must be the regret of the public that his purposes were not accomplished, and the reluctance of every considerate person to attempt a similar undertaking. Indeed, the high expectations which were so generally formed, of the delight and instruction that would be imparted by Sir James's delineation, rested upon the assurance of a combination of qualities in him which *cannot* be looked for elsewhere:—an early knowledge of the subject of the memoir; a close intimacy with him at the precise time when his faculties were most rapidly unfolding; incessant opportunities of watching the peculiarities of his intellectual constitution, and of measuring, by the application of power to power, the native and growing energy of his mind; a mind of nearly the same order, and possessing many of the same characteristics; a sincere affection for his friend, ripened into as sincere a veneration for his principles; and judgment, discrimination, and feeling most beautifully attempered, and exquisitely fitted, to trace, classify, and describe.

Since none, therefore, it was presumed, would follow the plan thus laid down, from an absolute despair of combining the adequate prerequisites, the idea of such a critical estimate was abandoned; and it was proposed that, instead of it, a concise Memoir, more strictly biographical, should be given.

Mr. Hall's family, and the friends immediately interested in the completion and success of these Works, strongly urged me to this additional undertaking; and though I for some weeks resisted all entreaty, and suggested applications to others, whom I sincerely thought much better qualified, yet, finding that the Works, regarded as literary property, were receiving injury from the delay, however inevitable, I at length consented to prepare the Memoir, modified, as it must be, by the necessities of the case. The reasons which so long prevented me from yielding to the wishes of these friends may now be adduced in apology for the imperfections with which I am persuaded the Memoir abounds. I have had incessantly to encounter difficulties arising from the nature of the undertaking, —from the contrast, which will assuredly force itself upon every reader, between my unfitness to prepare any memorial of Mr. Hall, and the peculiar fitness of the distinguished individual to whom the public had been looking,—from the extraordinary character of the subject of the Memoir,—from the want of such incidents and events as give interest to biography, except, indeed, one or two, upon which no man of delicacy and feeling could dwell,—from an indifferent state of health, and such a total want of leisure as never allowed me to devote two successive days, and seldom indeed two successive hours, to the

labour,—from the utter impracticability of postponing it to a more favourable season; and, in addition to all the preceding, the difficulties growing out of a sense of incompetency, perpetually *felt*, to discharge with spirit and success the functions of a biographer; the habits of my life, which have been those of demonstration, disqualifying me, at least in my own judgment, for biographical or other narration.

In the midst of so many difficulties, I have endeavoured, to the extent of my own information, and such authentic information as I could collect from others, to make the reader acquainted with the principal facts in Mr. Hall's life, with his pursuits, his manners, his deportment in private and domestic life, and as a minister. I have, in short, aimed to trace him from childhood to maturity, from maturity to his death, and throughout to present a plain, simple, accurate, and, I hope, a sufficiently full account of this most eminent and estimable man. His extraordinary talents as a writer will be infinitely better inferred from the perusal of his Works, than from any such critical examination of them as I could have presented. Some of the hints which are occasionally introduced as I have proceeded may, perhaps, assist in illustrating a few peculiarities in his intellectual character; or, by connecting some of his productions with the circumstances in which they were composed, may probably cause them to be perused with additional interest. But I have kept in view a still higher object,—that of tracing him in his social and moral relations, and showing how gradually, yet how completely, his fine talents and acquirements became subordinated to the power of Divine grace, and devoted to the promotion of the glory of God, and the happiness of man.

Fearing, however, that my own biographical sketch will convey but an inadequate idea, even of Mr. Hall's private and social character, I have inserted, in an Appendix, communications received from three friends, and which will, I trust, serve considerably to supply my deficiencies.

Mr. Hall's qualities as a preacher I have attempted to describe briefly, as they fell under my own notice at Cambridge; at a season when they had nearly reached their meridian with regard to intellect and eloquence, though not with respect to all the higher requisites of ministerial duty. I have also inserted in the Appendix a short account of Mr. Hall's preaching in 1821, written by the late Mr. John Scott. These, with the more comprehensive, elaborate, and philosophical "Observations," from the pen of Mr. Foster, will, I trust, enable such as never had the privilege of listening to Mr. Hall's instructions from the pulpit, to form a tolerable estimate of his power as a

preacher. Although, as will be perceived, I differ from Mr. Foster in some of his opinions and criticisms, yet I cannot but fully appreciate the peculiar fidelity and corresponding beauty with which he has delineated, not merely the more prominent excellences of Mr. Hall's sermons, both with regard to structure and delivery, but some of those which, while they are palpable as to their result, are latent as to their sources, until they are brought to light by Mr. Foster's peculiar faculty of mental research. And hence it will, I am persuaded, be found, that while he only professes to describe the character of his friend "as a preacher," he has successfully explored, and correctly exhibited, those attributes of his intellectual character which caused both his preaching and his writing to be so singularly delightful and impressive.

In all that is thus presented, whether by my several correspondents, by Mr. Foster, or by myself, the object has not been to overload the character of our deceased friend with extravagant eulogium; but by describing it as it has been viewed by different individuals, to enable the public—and may I not add, posterity?—to form, from their combined result, a more accurate estimate of his real character, intellectual, moral, and religious, than could be gathered from the efforts of any single writer.

To add to the usefulness of the Works, by facilitating reference to any part of them, a gentleman of competent judgment and information has prepared the general Index, which is placed at the end of this volume.

The whole Works are now committed to the public, with the persuasion that every part, except that which the editor has felt his own inability to execute successfully, will be favourably received; and that the greater portion of the contents will be found permanently interesting, instructive, and valuable.

OLINTHUS GREGORY.

Royal Military Academy,
*5th Dec.* 1832.

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# A BRIEF MEMOIR

OF

# THE REV. ROBERT HALL, A.M.

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BY DR. GREGORY.

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Robert Hall, whose Works are collected in the volumes now published, was born at Arnsby, a village about eight miles from Leicester on the 2d of May, 1764. His father was descended from a respectable family of yeomanry in Northumberland, whence he removed to Arnsby in 1753, on being chosen the pastor of a Baptist congregation in that place. He was not a man of learning, but a man of correct judgment and solid piety, an eloquent and successful preacher of the gospel, and one of the first among the modern Baptists in our villages who aimed to bring them down from the heights of ultra-Calvinism to those views of religious truth which are sound, devotional, and practical. He was the author of several useful publications, of which one, the "Help to Zion's Travellers," has gone through several editions, and is still much and beneficially read, on account of its tendency to remove various often-urged objections against some momentous points of evangelical truth. He was often appointed to draw up the "Circular Letters" from the ministers and messengers of the Northampton Association. One of these letters, published in 1776, presents, in small compass, so able a defence of the doctrine of the Trinity, that it might be advantageously republished for more general circulation. This excellent man died in March, 1791. His character has been beautifully sketched by his son,* who, in one sentence, while portraying his father, with equal accuracy depicted himself:—"He appeared to the greatest advantage upon subjects where the faculties of most men fail them; for the natural element of his mind was greatness."

The wife of this valuable individual was a woman of sterling sense and distinguished piety. She died in December, 1776.

Robert was the youngest of fourteen children, six of whom survived their parents. Four of these were daughters, of whom three are still living; the other son, John, settled as a farmer at Arnsby, and died in 1806.

Robert, while an infant, was so delicate and feeble, that it was scarcely expected he would reach maturity. Until he was two years of age he could neither walk nor talk. He was carried about in the arms of a nurse, who was kept for him alone, and who was directed to take him close after the plough in the field, and at other times to the sheep-pen, from a persuasion, very prevalent in the midland counties, that the exhalations from newly ploughed land, and from sheep in the

* See vol. ii. p. 369–371

fold, are salubrious and strengthening. Adjacent to his father's dwelling-house was a burial-ground; and the nurse, a woman of integrity and intelligence, judging from his actions that he was desirous to learn the meaning of the inscriptions on the grave-stones, and of the various figures carved upon them, managed, by the aid of those inscriptions, to teach him the letters of the alphabet, then to group them into syllables and words, and thus, at length, to read and speak. No sooner was his tongue loosed by this unusual but efficient process, than his advance became constantly marked. Having acquired the ability to speak, his constitutional ardour at once appeared. He was incessantly asking questions, and became a great and a *rapid* talker. One day, when he was about three years old, on his expressing disapprobation of some person who spoke quickly, his mother reminded him that *he* spoke very fast; "*No*," said he, "*I only keep at it.*"

Like many others who were born in villages, he received his first regular instructions (after he left his nurse's arms) at a dame's school. Dame Scotton had the honour of being his first professional instructer. From her he was transferred to a Mrs. Lyley, in the same village. While under their care he evinced an extraordinary thirst for knowledge, and became a collector of books. In the summer season, after the school-hours were over, he would put his richly prized library, among which was an Entick's Dictionary, into his pinafore, steal into the grave-yard (which, from an early and fixed association, he regarded as his study), lie down upon the grass, spread his books around him, and there remain until the deepening shades of evening compelled him to retire into the house.

At about six years of age he was placed, as a day-scholar, under the charge of a Mr. Simmons, of Wigston, a village about four miles from Arnsby. At first, he walked to school in the mornings, and home again in the evenings. But the severe pain in his back, from which he suffered so much through life, had even then begun to distress him; so that he was often obliged to lie down upon the road, and sometimes his brother John and his other school-fellows carried him, in turn, he repaying them during their labour by relating some amusing story, or detailing some of the interesting results of his reading. On his father's ascertaining his inability to walk so far daily, he took lodgings for him and his brother at the house of a friend in the village: after this arrangement was made, they went to Wigston on the Monday mornings, and returned to Arnsby on the Saturday afternoons.

The course of instruction at Mr. Simmons's school was not very extensive; and Robert was not likely to restrict himself, as a student, to its limits. On starting from home on the Monday, it was his practice to take with him two or three books from his father's library, that he might read them in the intervals between the school hours. The books he selected were not those of mere amusement, but such as required deep and serious thought. The works of Jonathan Edwards, for example, were among his favourites; and it is an ascertained fact, that before he was nine years of age, he had perused and reperused, with intense interest, the treatises of that profound and extraordinary thinker, on the "Affections," and on the "Will." About the same time he read, with a like interest, "Butler's Analogy." He used to ascribe his early predilection for this class of studies, in great measure, to his intimate association, in mere childhood, with a tailor, one of his father's congregation, a very shrewd, well-informed man, and an acute metaphysician. Before he was ten years old, he had written many essays, principally on religious subjects; and often invited his brother and sisters to hear

him preach. About this time, too, in one of those anticipatory distributions of a father's property, which, I apprehend, are not unusual with boys, he proposed that his brother should have the cows, sheep, and pigs, on their father's death, and leave him "all the books." These juvenile "dividers of the inheritance," seem to have overlooked their sisters; unless, indeed, they assigned them the furniture. The incident, however, is mentioned simply to show what it was that Robert even then most prized.

He remained at Mr. Simmons's school until he was eleven years of age, when this conscientious master informed the father that he was quite unable to keep pace with his pupil, declaring that he had been often obliged to sit up all night to prepare the lessons for the morning; a practice he could no longer continue, and must therefore relinquish his favourite scholar.

The proofs of extraordinary talent and of devotional feeling which Robert had now for some time exhibited, not only gratified his excellent parents, but seemed to mark the expediency and propriety of devoting him to the sacred office; but the delicate health of the son, and the narrow means of the father, occasioned some perplexity. Mr. Hall, therefore, took his son to Kettering, in order that he might avail himself of the advice of an influential and valued friend residing there, Mr. Beeby Wallis. Their interview soon led to the choice of a suitable boarding-school; but the pallid and sickly appearance of the boy exciting Mr. Wallis's sympathy, he prevailed upon his father to leave him at his house for a few weeks, in the hope that change of air would improve his health. This gentleman was so greatly astonished at the precocity of talent of his youthful visiter, that he several times requested him to deliver a short address to a select auditory invited for the purpose. The juvenile orator often afterward adverted to the injury done him by the incongruous elevation to which he was thus raised. "Mr. Wallis," said he, "was one whom everybody loved. He belonged to a family in which probity, candour, and benevolence constituted the general likeness: but conceive, sir, if you can, the egregious impropriety of setting a boy of eleven to preach to a company of grave gentlemen, full half of whom wore wigs. I never call the circumstance to mind but with grief at the vanity it inspired; nor, when I think of such mistakes of good men, am I inclined to question the correctness of Baxter's language, strong as it is, where he says, 'Nor should men turn preachers as the river Nilus breeds frogs (saith Herodotus), when one half *moveth* before the other is *made*, and while it is yet *but plain mud!*' "*

Robert's health appearing much improved from his short residence at Kettering, he was placed by his father as a boarder, at the school of the Rev. John Ryland in the neighbouring town of Northampton. Mr. Ryland was a very extraordinary man, whose excellences and eccentricities were strangely balanced. In him were blended the ardour and vehemence of Whitfield, with the intrepidity of Luther. His pulpit oratory was of the boldest character, and singularly impressive, when he did not overstep the proprieties of the ministerial function. In his school he was both loved and feared; his prevailing kindness and benevolence exciting affection, while his stern determination to *do* what was right, as well as to *require* what he *thought* right, too often kept alive among his pupils a sentiment of apprehension and alarm. So far as I can learn, from several who had been under his care, he taught Greek

* Saint's Rest, Preface to Part II. original edition.

better than Latin, and the rudiments of mathematical science with more success than those of grammar and the languages. His pupils never forgot his manner of explaining the doctrine and application of ratios and proportions; and they who had ever formed a part of his "living orrery," by which he incorporated the elements of the solar system among the amusements of the play-ground, obtained a knowledge of that class of facts which they seldom, if ever, lost.

Our youthful student remained under Mr. Ryland's care but little more than a year and a half; during which, however, according to his father's testimony, "he made great progress in Latin and Greek;" while, in his own judgment, the principle of emulation was called into full activity, the habit of composition was brought into useful exercise, the leading principles of abstract science were collected, and a thirst for knowledge of every kind acquired. It should also be mentioned here, that it was during the time Robert was Mr. Ryland's pupil that he heard a sermon preached at Northampton, by Mr. Robins, of Daventry, whose religious instruction, conveyed "in language of the most classic purity," at once "impressive and delightful," excited his early relish for chaste and elegant composition.*

From the time he quitted Northampton until he entered the "Bristol Education Society," or academy for the instruction of young men preparing for the ministerial office among the Baptists, he studied divinity, and some collateral subjects, principally under the guidance of his father, with occasional hints from his acute metaphysical friend, still residing in the same village. Having, in this interval, given satisfactory proofs of his piety, and of a strong predilection for the pastoral office, he was placed at the Bristol Institution, upon Dr. Ward's foundation, in October, 1778, being then in his fifteenth year. He remained there until the autumn of 1781, when the president of the institution reported to the general meeting of subscribers and friends, that "two pupils, Messrs. Stennet and Hall, had been continued upon Dr. Ward's exhibition, but were now preparing to set out for Scotland, according to the doctor's will."

The Bristol Academy, when Mr. Hall first joined it, was under the superintendence of the Rev. Hugh Evans, who was shortly afterward succeeded by his son, Dr. Caleb Evans, both as president of the institution, and as pastor of the Baptist church in Broadmead. The Rev. James Newton was the classical tutor. Under these able men he pursued his studies with great ardour and perseverance. He became an early riser; and it was remarked in consequence, that he was often ready to attend the tutor for the morning lessons, before some of his fellow-students had commenced their preparation.

His sentiments at this time respecting his theological tutor, and the importance of his studies in general, may be gathered from the subjoined extracts from two letters to his father, both written before July, 1780.

"Dr. Evans is a most amiable person in every respect: as a man, generous and open-hearted; as a Christian, lively and spiritual; as a preacher, pathetic and fervent; and as a tutor, gentle, meek, and condescending. I can truly say that he has, on all occasions, behaved to me with the tenderness and affection of a parent, whom I am bound by the most endearing ties to hold in everlasting honour and esteem.

"Through the goodness of God, of whom in all things I desire to be continually mindful, my pursuits of knowledge afford me increasing pleasure, and lay open fresh sources of improvement and entertainment. That branch of wisdom in which, above all others, I wish and crave your assistance is *divinity*, of all others

* See vol. ii. p. 390.

the most interesting and important. It is the height of my ambition, that, in some happy period of my life, my lot may be cast near you, when I may have the unspeakable pleasure of consulting, on different subjects, you, whose judgment I esteem not less than an oracle.

"We, poor short-sighted creatures, are ready to apprehend that we know all things, before we know any thing; whereas it is a great part of knowledge to know that we know nothing. Could we behold the vast depths of unfathomed science, or glance into the dark recesses of hidden knowledge, we should be ready to tremble at the precipice, and cry out, 'Who is sufficient for these things?"

The system of instruction at Bristol comprehended not merely the learned languages and the rudiments of science, but a specific course of preparation for the ministerial office, including the habit of public speaking. Essays and theses on appropriate topics were written and delivered, under the direction of the tutors: religious exercises were carefully attended to; and the students were appointed, in turns, to speak or preach upon subjects selected by the president. Among the books first put into Mr. Hall's hands to prepare him for these exercises was Gibbon's Rhetoric, which he read with the utmost avidity, and often mentioned in after-life, as rekindling the emotion excited by Mr. Robins's preaching, improving his sensibility to the utility as well as beauty of fine writing, and creating an intense solicitude to acquire an elegant as well as a perspicuous style. He was therefore more active in this department of academical labour than many of his compeers. Usually, however, after his written compositions had answered the purpose for which they were prepared, he made no effort to preserve them; but either carelessly threw them aside, or distributed them among his associates, if they expressed any desire to possess them. Some of these early productions, therefore, have escaped the corrosions of time. The only one which I have been able to obtain is an essay on "Ambition," in which there is more of the tumultuary flourish of the orator, than he would ever have approved after he reached his twentieth year. Nor was it correct in sentiment. The sole species of excellence recommended to be pursued was superiority of intellect; all moral qualities, as well as actions directed to the promotion of human welfare, being entirely overlooked.

Indeed, there is reason to apprehend that at this period of his life, Mr. Hall, notwithstanding the correctness and excellence of his general principles, and the regularity of his devotional habits, had set too high an estimate on merely intellectual attainments, and valued himself, not more perhaps than was natural to youth, yet too much, on the extent of his mental possessions. No wonder, then, that he should experience salutary mortification. And thus it happened. He was appointed, agreeably to the arrangement already mentioned, to deliver an address in the vestry of Broadmead chapel, on 1 Tim. iv. 10. "Therefore, we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men; specially of those that believe." After proceeding, for a short time, much to the gratification of his auditory, he suddenly paused, covered his face with his hands, exclaimed, "Oh! I have lost all my ideas," and sat down, his hands still hiding his face. The failure, however, painful as it was to his tutors, and humiliating to himself, was such as rather augmented than diminished their persuasion of what he could accomplish, if once he acquired self-possession. He was therefore appointed to speak again, on the same subject, at the same place, the ensuing week. This second attempt was accompanied by a second failure, still more painful to witness, and still more grievous to bear. He hastened from the vestry, and on retiring to his room,

exclaimed, "If *this* does not humble me, the devil *must* have me!" Such were the early efforts of him whose humility afterward became as conspicuous as his talents, and who, for nearly half a century, excited universal attention and admiration by the splendour of his pulpit eloquence.

Our student spent the first summer vacation after his entering the Bristol institution under the paternal roof at Arnsby; and, in the course of that residence at home, accompanied his father to some public religious service at Clipstone, a village in Northamptonshire. Mr. Hall, senior, and Mr. Beddome of Bourton, well known by his Hymns, and his truly valuable Sermons,* were both engaged to preach. But the latter, being much struck with the appearance, and some of the remarks, of the son of his friend, was exceedingly anxious that *he* should preach in the evening, and proposed to relinquish his own engagement, rather than be disappointed. To this injudicious proposal, after resisting every importunity for some time, he at length yielded; and entered the pulpit to address an auditory of *ministers*, many of whom he had been accustomed from his infancy to regard with the utmost reverence. He selected for his text 1 John i. 5, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all;" and, it is affirmed, treated this mysterious and awful subject with such metaphysical acumen, and drew from it such an impressive application, as excited the deepest interest.

On the arrival of the summer vacation, in 1780, he again visited Arnsby; and during the period he then remained at home, his father became fully satisfied that his piety was genuine, as well as that his qualifications for the office of a preacher were of a high order. He therefore expressed to many of his friends his desire that he should be "set apart to the sacred work." Solicitous not to be led aside from a correct judgment by the partiality of a father, he resolved that the church over which he was pastor should judge of his son's fitness, and recognise their conviction by a solemn act. The members of the church, after cautious and deliberate inquiry, ratified the decision of the anxious parent, and earnestly and unanimously requested "that Robert Hall, jun. might be set apart to public employ."

"Accordingly," as the following extract from 'the Church-book' testifies, on the 13th of August, 1780, "he was examined by his father before the church, respecting his inclination, motives, and end, in reference to the ministry, and was likewise desired to make a declaration of his religious sentiments. All which being done to the entire satisfaction of the church,† they therefore set him apart by lifting up their right hands, and by solemn prayer.

* See vol. ii. p. 456, 457.

† As the words *church*, *deacon*, &c., when used by congregational dissenters, whether Baptist or Pedobaptist, are employed in senses differing from what are current among Episcopalians, I annex this brief note to prevent misconception.

Among the orthodox dissenters of the class just specified, a distinction is always made between a church and a congregation. A *congregation* includes the whole of an assembly collected in one place for worship, and may therefore comprehend, not merely real Christians, but nominal Christians, and, it may be, unbelievers, who, from various motives, often attend public worship. The *church* is constituted of that portion of these, who, after cautious investigation, are believed, in the exercise of judgment and charity, to be real Christians. It is regarded as the duty of such to unite themselves in fellowship with a church, and conform to its rules; and the admission is by the suffrage of the members of the respective *church*; its connected congregation having no voice in this matter. A Christian church is regarded as a voluntary society, into which the members are incorporated under the authority of Christ, whose laws they engage to obey, for the important purposes of promoting the mutual improvement of those who compose it by an orderly discharge of religious duties, and of bringing others to the knowledge of the truth. Every such church of Christ is considered as an independent society, having a right to enjoy its own sentiments, to choose its own officers, maintain its own discipline, admit members, or expel them on persisting in conduct unworthy of the Christian profession; without being controlled or called to an account by any others whatever.

"His father then delivered a discourse to him, from 2 Tim. ii. 1. *Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.* Being thus sent forth, he preached in the afternoon from 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. *The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*—May the Lord bless him, and grant him great success!"

It is worthy of observation that, on this solemn occasion, as well as when he preached at Clipstone, Mr. Hall selected texts of the class most calculated to elicit those peculiar powers for which he was through life distinguished.

In little more than a year after Mr. Hall had been thus publicly designated a preacher of the gospel, having pursued his studies at Bristol with great assiduity and corresponding success, he was, as already hinted, appointed to King's College, Aberdeen, on Dr. Ward's foundation. In his journey thither, he was accompanied by Mr. Joseph Stennett, the son of the late Rev. Dr. Stennett, and another student, Mr. John Pownall, still living. The two former of these had letters to the venerable Dr. Erskine of Edinburgh; and he again supplied them with introductions to two eminent individuals at Aberdeen. This appears from a letter sent by the doctor, 9d Nov. 1781, to Mr. Ryland of Northampton; from which, as it exhibits his view of the state of things at Aberdeen at that period, I present a brief extract.

"I had the pleasure of your letter by Messrs. Stennett and Hall last week. They appear to me pleasant young men, and I should have been happy to have had further opportunities of showing my regard to the children of so worthy parents than their short stay here allowed. Though there are many excellent teachers at Aberdeen, and both they and the ministers are remarkable for purity of morals, I have some fears, from different accounts, that the general strain of preaching there is less evangelical than in several pulpits in Glasgow or Edinburgh. Principal Campbell and Dr. Beattie are, in my opinion, able and worthy men; and my difference with the first, as to the American war and the popish bill has not impaired our mutual esteem. I wrote letters to introduce the young gentlemen to both."

Mr. Hall, for many years afterward, used often to speak of the affectionate attentions of Dr. Erskine on this occasion; and of his own feelings when on taking leave the venerable man of God exhorted him to self-vigilance, kissed him, laid his hand upon his head, blessing him, and commending him to the watchful care of the great Head of the church.

At the time when he went to Aberdeen, the reputation of the two colleges, King's and Marischal College, was almost equally balanced. At the latter, Principal Campbell and Dr. Beattie, professor of moral philosophy, had attained a high and merited celebrity both on account of their lectures and their writings: while at King's College, the divinity lectures of Dr. Gerard were much and greatly esteemed; and some of the other professors were men of eminence. Many, therefore, especially of the divinity students, attended the appropriate lectures at the two colleges.*

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Such a church, as a Christian community, observes the sacrament, or "communion of the body and blood of Christ," at stated seasons; the members of other churches being admissible, with the consent of the members present, on any specific occasion.

The officers of such a church consist of bishops or presbyters (i. e. pastors) and deacons. The latter are not, as in the Church of England, and among other Episcopalians, an order of the clergy, but are *laymen*. They are chosen from among the members of the church, and their business is "to see that the table of the Lord, the table of the poor, and the table of the minister be supplied." They attend to the secular concerns of the church, as a body, and to all that relates to the convenience of the society, in reference to their public meeting. In many societies, too, they assist the pastor in his general superintendence.

* At King's College, during Mr. Hall's studies there, Mr. John Leslie was professor of Greek;

Mr. Hall, in a letter addressed to his deservedly prized friend the late Dr. Ryland, towards the end of this first session at college, speaks thus of his studies and of two of the professors:—

"We entered the Greek class under Mr. Leslie, who, though a man of no apparent brightness of parts, is, notwithstanding, well fitted for his office, being a good grammarian, and attentive to the interests of his pupils. We have been employed in the class in going over more accurately the principles of the Greek language, and reading select passages in Xenophon and Homer: and I have privately read through Xenophon's Anabasis, and Memorabilia of Socrates, several books of Homer, and some of the Greek Testament; and am now reading *Longini de Sublimitate liber*, which I hope to finish next week."

In the same letter he mentions his reading with Professor Ogilvie whose versions of the Latin poets he characterizes as "extremely elegant." He laments the want of religious advantages in this seat of learning, and deplores the profanity and profligacy of many of the students; one of whom, he assures his friend, affirmed that he knew no use even in the word "God," except to give point to an oath! To make up for this sad deficiency, he adds, "We have found some agreeable acquaintances in the New Town, and among them the sister of Mr. Cruden, the author of the Concordance."

The same letter contains evidence that he did not confine his attention solely to classical and mathematical studies. After expressing his admiration of the devotional as well as rational spirit that "lives and breathes" in every page of Edwards, he adds:—

"My thoughts are at present too much immersed in literary exercises to admit of long or close application of thought to any thing else. I have, however, been thinking a little on the distinction of *natural* and *moral ability*, and have in my mind an objection upon which I should be glad to have your thoughts. It is briefly this: If, according to Edwards, the will always follows the last dictate of the understanding, and if it be determined, directed, and biased by the view of the understanding, what room then is left for any notion of moral ability as distinct from natural? or how can there in this case be any depravity of the will, without supposing a prior defect in the understanding? Since the will, if it be wrong in its bias, is first led to that bias by the understanding; and where then the possibility of a *moral inability* consisting with a *natural ability*? This I hope to have some conversation with you upon when I have the happiness of seeing you. I have with me Edwards on the Will, and have lately perused it often; and the more I read it the more I admire."

The lamented death of Sir James Mackintosh has left a blank which none can adequately fill, with regard to Mr. Hall's character, habits, and the development of his intellectual powers at this period. On application, however, to an esteemed friend, Professor Paul, he has kindly communicated a few particulars, which I shall give in his own language.

"What I now transmit is drawn from the college records, from the recollection of Dr. Jack, principal of King's College, and formerly for three years a classfellow of Mr. Hall, and from my own knowledge; for I, also, was a contemporary of Mr. Hall, having commenced my first year's studies when he commenced his fourth. It appears from the album that Mr. Hall entered college in the beginning of November, 1781. His first year was spent principally under the tuition of Mr. Professor Leslie, in the acquisition of the Greek language; his second, third, and

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Mr. Roderick Macleod, professor of philosophy, including mathematics; Mr. W. Ogilvie, professor of humanity; Mr. James Dunbar, professor of moral philosophy; and Dr. Alexander Gerard professor of divinity. Though some of these were highly distinguished men, Dr. Gerard was most known to the world of English literature. Among his works are "An Essay on Genius," "An Essay on Taste," two volumes of valuable Sermons, and his "Lectures on the Pastoral Care," published in 1799 by his son, Dr. Gilbert Gerard.

fourth years under that of Mr. Professor Macleod, when he studied mathematics, natural philosophy, and moral philosophy. He took his degree in arts (i. e. A.M. degree) on the 30th of March, 1785. Principal Jack says that he attended the professor of humanity, Mr. Ogilvie, during the four years he was at college, both for Latin and natural history; but as there is no record of the students of the humanity and natural history classes, this fact depends wholly on the principal's recollection. I learn from the same source that Sir James Mackintosh and Mr. Hall while at college read a great deal of Greek in private, and that their reputation was high among their fellow-students for their attainments in that language. Principal Jack also bears testimony to Mr. Hall's great success in his mathematical and philosophical studies, and affirms that he was the first scholar of his class, in the various branches of education taught at college. During one of the sessions the principal was member of a select literary society, consisting of only eight or ten students, of which society Sir James and Mr. Hall were the distinguished ornaments. None of Mr. Hall's college exercises are now to be found in this place; but my impressions correspond with those of the principal, that his acquirements were of the very first order; and as Sir James had left college before I entered, having received his A.M. degree 30th March, 1784, there was no one at college in my time who could be at all put in competition with Mr. Hall. But it was not as a scholar alone that Mr. Hall's reputation was great at college. He was considered by all the students as a model of correct and regular deportment, of religious and moral habits, of friendly and benevolent affections."

To this concise summary I subjoin the few particulars which I gathered from Sir James Mackintosh himself.

When these two eminent men first became acquainted, Sir James was in his eighteenth year, Mr. Hall about a year older. Sir James described Mr. Hall as attracting notice by a most ingenuous and intelligent countenance, by the liveliness of his manner, and by such indications of mental activity as could not be misinterpreted. His appearance was that of health, yet not of robust health; and he often suffered from paroxysms of pain, during which he would roll about on the carpet in the utmost agony; but no sooner had the pain subsided than he would resume his part in conversation with as much cheerfulness and vivacity as before he had been thus interrupted. Sir James said he became attached to Mr. Hall, "because he could not help it." There wanted many of the supposed constituents of friendship. Their tastes at the commencement of their intercourse were widely different; and upon most of the important topics of inquiry there was no congeniality of sentiment: yet notwithstanding this, the *substratum* of their minds seemed of the same cast, and upon this Sir James thought the edifice of their mutual regard first rested. Yet he ere long became fascinated by his brilliancy and acumen, in love with his cordiality and ardour, and "awe-struck" (I think that was the term employed) by the transparency of his conduct and the purity of his principles. They read together; they sat together at lecture, if possible; they walked together. In their joint studies they read much of Xenophon and Herodotus, and more of Plato; and so well was all this known, exciting admiration in some, in others envy, that it was not unusual as they went along for their class-fellows to point at them and say, "*There go Plato and Hērodōtus.*" But the arena in which they met most frequently was that of morals and metaphysics; furnishing topics of incessant disputation After having sharpened their weapons by reading, they often repaired to the spacious sands upon the seashore, and still more frequently to the picturesque scenery on the banks of the Don, above the Old Town, to discuss with eagerness the various subjects to which their attention had been directed. There was scarcely an important position in Berkeley's Minute Philosopher, in Butler's Analogy, or in Edwards on the

Will, over which they had not thus debated with the utmost intensity. Night after night, nay, month after month, for two sessions, they met only to study or to dispute; yet no unkindly feeling ensued. The process seemed rather like blows in that of welding iron to knit them closer together. Sir James said, that his companion as well as himself often contended for victory, yet never, so far as he could then judge, did either make a voluntary sacrifice of truth, or stoop to draw to and fro the *serra λογομαχίας*, as is too often the case with ordinary controvertists. From these discussions, and from subsequent meditation upon them, Sir James learned more *as to principles* (such at least he assured me was his deliberate conviction) than from all the books he ever read. On the other hand, Mr. Hall through life reiterated his persuasion, that his friend possessed an intellect more analogous to that of Bacon than any person of modern times; and that if he had devoted his powerful understanding to metaphysics, instead of law and politics, he would have thrown an unusual light upon that intricate but valuable region of inquiry. Such was the cordial, reciprocal testimony of these two distinguished men. And in many respects—latterly I hope and believe in *all* the most essential—it might be truly said of both "as face answereth to face in a glass, so does the heart of a man to his friend."

It will be seen from the first of the series of letters inserted in this volume,* that, shortly after Mr. Hall's return to Aberdeen in November, 1783, he received an invitation from the church at Broadmead to associate himself with Dr. Caleb Evans, as the assistant pastor; an invitation which he accepted with much doubt and diffidence. After some correspondence it was arranged that Mr. Hall should reside at Bristol, in the interval (of nearly six months) between the college sessions of 1784 and 1785, and then return to Aberdeen to complete his course. In this important session, from the beginning of November, 1784, to May, 1785, he seems to have devoted himself most sedulously to his studies; especially the Greek language, with moral and intellectual philosophy, and those other departments of inquiry which are most intimately related to theology. During the session, too, he attended Dr. Campbell's lectures at Marischal College, and frequently profited by the doctor's expository discourses, delivered once each fortnight; while he generally attended public worship at the church where Mr. Abercromby and Mr. Peters, both regarded as holding correct sentiments, were the alternate preachers. He had now lost his chosen companion, the sharpener of his faculties by animated yet friendly debate; and he sought for no substitute in society, but resolved to turn the deprivation into a benefit, by a more arduous application to his literary pursuits, and by cultivating habits of meditation. "I now," said he, in a letter to his father, "find retirement prodigiously sweet, and here I am entirely uninterrupted and left to my own thoughts." In this disposition he commenced and concluded the session.

By the time Mr. Hall had thus completed his academical course, his mental powers, originally strong, had attained an extraordinary vigour and with the exception of the Hebrew language, of which he then knew nothing, he had become rich in literary, intellectual, and biblical acquisition. On resuming his labours at Broadmead, in conjunction with Dr. Evans, his preaching excited an unusual attention, the place of worship was often crowded to excess, and many of the most distinguished men in Bristol, including several clergymen, were among his occasional auditors.

* See p. 207

This popularity not only continued, but increased, until he removed to another sphere of action. The brilliancy and force of his eloquence were universally acknowledged; while, in private life, his instructive and fascinating conversation drew equal admiration. Yet it ought not to be concealed (for I simply announce his own deliberate conviction, frequently expressed in after-life) that at this time he was very inadequately qualified for the duties of a minister of the gospel. He had, it is true, firmly embraced and cordially relied upon those fundamental truths which are comprehended in the declaration,—"He that cometh unto God must believe that He *is*, and that He is the *rewarder* of them that diligently seek him;" and he often expatiated, with much originality and beauty, upon the Divine attributes, and constantly exhorted men to adhere closely to the path of duty; yet, not often from the higher, namely, the evangelical motives, to pure, and benevolent, and holy conduct. His knowledge of Christianity, as a system of restoration and reconciliation, was comparatively defective and obscure; and he felt but little alive to those peculiarities of the new dispensation, upon which, in maturer life, he loved to dwell. In his preaching he dealt too much in generalities, or enlarged upon topics which, though in a certain sense noble and inspiring, and thus calculated to elevate the mind, did not immediately flow from the great scheme of redemption, which it was his especial office to disclose. The extent of God's matchless love and mercy—the depth of the mystery of his designs—the inexhaustible treasury of his blessings and graces—the wonderful benefits flowing from the incarnation, humiliation, and sacrifice of the Son of God—the delightful privileges of the saints—were themes to which he recurred far less frequently than in later days; and he persuaded himself that this was not *very* wrong, because his colleague, Dr. Evans, who had "the care of the church," adverted so incessantly to the doctrines of our Lord's Divinity and atonement, of spiritual influence and regeneration, as to leave room for *him* to explore other regions of instruction and interest.

It is possible that Mr. Hall, from his habit of self-depreciation, may have a little overcharged this picture: yet the notes of several of his sermons, preached from 1785 to 1789, taken down by one of the congregation, and which are now in my possession, confirm, to a considerable extent, the existence of the serious defect which he subsequently so much deplored.

Considering his early age, twenty-one, it was manifestly unfavourable to the correct development of his character *as a preacher*, that in August, 1785, only three months after his quitting Aberdeen, he was appointed classical tutor in the Bristol Academy, on the resignation of Mr. Newton. That additional appointment he held for more than five years, and discharged its duties with marked zeal and activity, and with commensurate success. At this period of his life he was celebrated as a satirist, and would overwhelm such of his associates as tempted him to the use of those formidable weapons with wit and raillery, not always playful. Aware, however, that this propensity was calculated to render him unamiable, and to give permanent pain to others (a result which the generosity of his disposition made him anxious to avoid), he endeavoured to impose a restraint upon himself, by writing the essay on the "Character of Cleander;"* in which he exposes, with just severity, that species of sarcasm to which he believed himself most prone; and thus, by its publication, gave to others the opportunity, when he slid into this practice, of reproving him in his own language.

* See vol. ii. p. 343

It seems to have been remarkably, and doubtless mercifully, over ruled, that during this period of Mr. Hall's history, though his more judicious and wise friends were often grieved by the free and daring speculations which he advanced in private, he never promulgated direct and positive error from the pulpit. And thus they who were filled with apprehension on account of sallies in conversation would listen with delight to his public addresses. This will be evinced by a few extracts from the journals of two of his constant friends.

Mr. Fuller writes, "1784, May 7. Heard Mr. Robert Hall, jun., from 'He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.' Felt very solemn in hearing some parts.—The Lord keep that young man!"

Again, "1785, June 14. Taken up with the company of Mr. Robert Hall, jun.: feel much pain for him. The Lord, in mercy to him and his churches in this country, keep him in the path of truth and righteousness."

In like manner, Dr. Ryland: "June 8, 1785. Robert Hall, jun., preached wonderfully from Rom. viii. 18, 'For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us.' I admire many things in this young man exceedingly, though there are others that make me fear for him. O that the Lord may keep him humble, and make him prudent!"

Again, "June 15. Rode to Clipstone to attend the ministers' meeting. R. Hall, jun., preached a glorious sermon, on the immutability of God, from James i. 17, 'The Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of turning.'"

Again, "1786, June 13. Sent off a letter to Robert Hall, jun., which I wrote chiefly in answer to one of his some months ago, wherein he replied to mine concerning some disagreeable reports from Birmingham: added some new hints respecting another matter lately reported. O that God may keep that young man in the way of truth and holiness."

It hence appears, that Dr. Ryland, who was nearly twelve years older than Mr. Hall, and had known him from his childhood, did not rest satisfied with silent lamentations. This excellent man, fearing that his young friend was about to precipitate himself into a very dangerous course, sought by kind but strong expostulation to rescue him from the peril; and thus addressed him:—

"My very dear Friend,

"The fullest consciousness that I have a right to call you so, as really feeling an earnest and tender concern for your welfare, and the recollection that you apparently allowed it when I last saw you, encourages me to write to you; though I may as well tell you at once that I am going to write to you in the same strain of complaint and censure which I have been constrained to use before. And indeed my fears and grief were never excited to such a degree concerning you as they now are. I still hope, however, you have much love to God; and I trust so much conviction of my sincere friendship, that you will not say of me as one said of Micaiah, 'I hate him, for he is always saying evil of me.' Indeed, the things that grieve me I shall industriously conceal from everybody as long as I can; but I fear they will spread fast enough: for if you openly utter all your mind, there are not many who will mourn in secret over the report.

"It gave me extreme uneasiness to hear, this week, of the general disgust you had given to your former friends at Birmingham, on your last visit. Verily I wish that neither you, nor I, nor others may fight for the truth with infernal weapons. I would wish to feel in my inmost soul the tenderest pity for the most erroneous men in the world, and to show all proper respect to men of science, and men who are regular in their outward conduct. Nor should I at all approve of violent or harsh language, or like to speak my opinion of the state of individuals. But at the same time, I cannot but think that the lusts of the *mind* may as effectually ruin a man as 'the lusts of the *flesh*.' And I must get a good way towards Socinianism myself before I have any strong hope that a Socinian, living and dying

such, will see the kingdom of God. When the merciful Jesus declared, 'He that believeth shall be saved,' &c., I cannot believe that he meant simply, that he shall be saved who believes *that Jesus was not an impostor*, and who believes the *doctrine of the resurrection*. But these two articles are, I believe, the whole of Dr. Priestley's Christianity, and if once I were to think this Christianity enough to carry a man to heaven, I should not, I fear, be very strenuous in my endeavours to convince men of the danger of self-righteousness, and the necessity of a reliance on the atonement. Oh! my dear friend, can I conceive that your mind was deeply impressed with a sense of the divine purity and the justice of God's law, when you could utter so vain and vile a speech as this?"

The doctor then cites the language imputed to Mr. Hall. It implied, that if he were the Judge of all, he could not condemn Dr. Priestley. After animadverting strongly upon the phrase which he understood was actually employed, he proceeds thus:—

"It is, I am sure, not malevolence, but sincere love, that makes me jealous of you. May the Lord keep you. I wish you would look over afresh the Epistle to the Galatians, and examine whether your charity is as chaste as Paul's. I allude to a proverb you have doubtless heard—'Charity is an angel while she rejoiceth in the truth, a harlot when she rejoiceth in iniquity;' embracing those whom she should rather pity and weep over.

"Study to enter into the very spirit of Paul's discourse, 1 Cor. i. 18–31, or Gal. ii. 15–21; and if this is consistent with supposing it would be unfair for God to punish any man for rejecting the gospel, who understood chymistry and philosophy, why, then retain your favourable opinion of the safety of Socinians.

"Receive this as a proof of the affection with which I am

"Your faithful friend,

"J. Ryland."

Many high-spirited young men, we can readily imagine, would have treated such a letter as this with contempt; while others would have replied to it in a lofty tone of surprise and indignation. But Dr. Ryland's young friend, notwithstanding the errors into which his impetuosity had hurried him, had too much generosity to regard as insulting what he knew was dictated by affection; and therefore, anxious to show that he could bear reproof, and be thankful for it, he promptly replied:

"My dear Friend,

"I have just received your letter, and think it of so much importance as to deserve an immediate answer. Accordingly, without the least delay, I have set myself to reply to it. I am exceedingly obliged to you for your friendly expostulation, because I know it is the effusion of a pious and benevolent heart that wishes me well. With respect to the conversation at Birmingham, to which you allude, I shall conceal nothing."

He then, at the same time that he denies the precise language that was imputed to him, states what he did really say; and aims to justify the sentiment which he had maintained: disclaiming, however, any approximation to Socinian doctrine.

"You seem to suspect I am far gone in Socinianism; but in this, my dear friend, give me leave to say, you are utterly mistaken. Since I first began to reflect, I do not recollect a time when I was less inclined to Socinianism than at present. I can truly say, it would remove from me all my salvation and all my desire."

Again reverting to the expression employed, he adds,

"Allowing it to be improper, or too strong, I can only say, it does not belong to all to speak equally temperately; that the crime of expression can only be judged from the feelings, and that I am certain I did not *utter* it with any lightness of heart, but with deep feelings of earnestness and sincerity. Your charge of

imprudence I cordially admit; and now see, with more clearness than I formerly did, that the imprudent should never come into company with the malicious.

"I had more to say; but have no room. I sincerely thank you for your letter, and shall always be extremely grateful for your correspondence, your good wishes, and your prayers.

"Believe me, as ever, affectionately yours,

"R. HALL, junior."

These letters would not have been inserted after the lapse of fifty years, but for the salutary lesson which they supply. If Christian friendship always manifested itself in such fidelity as is here evinced, and uniformly experienced so kind and ingenuous a reception, what a different aspect, in a few years, would the Christian world assume!

When Mr. Hall was about twenty-three years of age, he had an opportunity of hearing Mr. Robinson, his predecessor at Cambridge, preach; and was so fascinated with his manner as to resolve to *imitate* it. But, after a few trials, he relinquished the attempt. The circumstance being afterward alluded to, he observed, "Why, sir, I was too proud to *remain* an imitator. After my second trial, as I was walking home, I heard one of the congregation say to another, 'Really, Mr. Hall *did remind* us of Mr. Robinson!' That, sir, was a knock-down blow to my vanity; and I at once resolved that if ever I *did* acquire reputation, it should be my own reputation, belonging to my own character, and not be that of *a likeness*. Besides, sir,* if I had not been a foolish young man, I should have seen how ridiculous it was to imitate such a preacher as Mr. Robinson. He had a musical voice, and was master of all its intonations; he had wonderful self-possession, and could say *what* he pleased, *when* he pleased, and *how* he pleased; while my voice and manner were naturally bad; and far from having self-command, I never entered the pulpit without omitting to say something that I wished to say, and saying something that I wished unsaid: and besides all this, I ought to have known that for me *to speak slow was ruin.*" "Why so?"—"I wonder that you, a student of philosophy, should ask such a question. You know, sir, that force, or momentum, is conjointly as the body and velocity; therefore, as my voice is feeble, what is wanted in body must be made up in velocity, or there will not be, cannot be any impression."

This remark, though thrown off hastily, in unreserved conversation, presents the theory of *one* important cause of the success of his rapid eloquence.

Shortly after this, Mr. Hall was, for the first time, in Mr. Robinson's society; I believe in London. Mr. Robinson was affluent in flatteries for those who worshipped him, while Mr. Hall neither courted flattery nor scattered its incense upon others. In speaking of the Socinian controversy, the elder indulged in sarcasm upon "juvenile defenders of the faith," and made various efforts to "set the young man down," which tempted Mr. Hall to reply that "if *he* ever rode into the field of public controversy, he should not borrow Dr. Abbadie's *boots*." This enigmatical retort† Mr. Robinson understood, and probably *felt* more than Mr. Hall had anticipated; for he had about that time quitted the field, put off "the boots," and passed to the verge of Socinianism. In the course of some discussions that followed, Mr. Hall, as most of those

* Mr. Hall very frequently repeated the word *sir* in his conversation, especially if he became animated.

† The allusion was to the defence of the Divinity of our Lord, published in French, by Dr. Abbadie, in his "Vindication of the Truth of the Christian Religion;" a work from which Mr. Robinson was thought to have borrowed many of the arguments in his "Plea for the Divinity," &c without acknowledgment

who were present thought, completely exposed the dangerous sophistry by which Mr. Robinson endeavoured to explain away some very momentous truths. Mr. Robinson, perceiving that the stream of opinion fell in with the arguments of his young opponent, and vexed at being thus foiled, lost his usual placidity and courtesy, and suddenly changed the topic of conversation, saying, "The company may be much better employed than by listening to a raw school-boy, whose head is crammed with Scotch metaphysics." Nothing but a consciousness that the "raw school-boy" had defeated him would have thus thrown him off his guard.

In 1788, Mr. Hall, weary of the solitude to which he was often subjected, as a mere lodger, and anticipating marriage in the course of a few months (an anticipation, however, which was not realized), hired a house; his sister Mary, afterward Mrs. James, kindly consenting to superintend his domestic concerns. From a letter which he then wrote to his father I extract a few passages.

"*Feb.* 10*th*, 1788.

"We have a great deal of talk here about the slave-trade; as I understand, from your letter, you have had too. A petition has been sent from hence to parliament for the abolishing it; and a committee is formed to co-operate with that in London, in any measures that may be taken to promote their purpose. At Bristol much opposition is made by the merchants and their dependants, who are many, perhaps most of them, engaged in it. Our petition was signed by eight hundred, or upwards; which, considering that *no application has been made to any*, we think a great number. Many things have been written in the papers on both sides: some pieces I have written myself, under the signature *Britannicus*,* which I purpose to get printed in a few pamphlets, and shall send one of them to you. The injustice and inhumanity of the trade are glaring, and upon this ground I mainly proceed: upon the *policy* of abolishing it I treat lightly, because I am dubious about it; nor can it be of great consequence to the question in hand; for, if it be proved cruel and unjust, it is impious to defend it. . . . . .

"I am afraid the abolition will not take place speedily, if at all. The trading and mercantile interest will make great outcry; the scheme will be thought chimerical, and after producing a few warm speeches, will, I fear, die away."

* * * * * * * *

"My own temper, I know, needs some correction, and it will be my daily endeavour to mend it: it wants *gentleness*. Mr. M——— has done me much good by convincing me, from his own example, to what perfection a temper naturally keen and lofty may be carried."

* * * * * * * *

"So far, I am happy that my duty and my gratification lie in the same direction: so that every step I take towards improvement may be a step towards real pleasure. One inconvenience, indeed, I labour under with respect to my temper, by being connected with my sister; and that is, *she never tries it*."

A serious trial of another kind now, however, awaited Mr. Hall—a painful misunderstanding between him and his friend and colleague Dr. Evans. It continued not only to disturb the minds of both, but, as might be expected, to create partisans among their respective friends, and indeed to endanger the peace of the church at Broadmead, for more than two years. I have read various written papers, and some pamphlets, which relate to this painful affair; and cannot but conclude that, like many others, it originated in such trifling misconceptions as, in more felicitous circumstances, neither party would have suffered to disturb his thoughts for an hour. A few hasty expressions, retorted by others both hasty and strong, tempted the doctor and his friends to

* These I have not been able to procure. It would be curious to compare them with his more mature sentiments on the subject, so admirably exhibited in vol. ii. p. 150–166

accuse Mr. Hall of ingratitude, and a want of deference to his superior in age and station; he, in his turn, repelled the accusation, in language too natural to a young man glowing with a lofty spirit of independence; and thus, new charges and fresh recriminations arose. The interposition of friends availed but little; for their unhallowed passions became ignited too. After many months spent in this unseemly strife, a meeting between the belligerent parties was held, in the presence of two friends of each, at the Mansion House, the Mayor of Bristol being one of the persons chosen by Dr. Evans. No beneficial effects resulted from this meeting; the individuals, who hoped by their interposition to ensure the restoration of amity, having long before ceased to be impartial judges in the affair. The parties on both sides, who were convened on this occasion, published their respective statements; from which it appears that one of them thought Mr. Hall justifiable, and censured Dr. Evans; while the other approved of the doctor's conduct, and condemned that of Mr. Hall.

It will not, then, be expected that I should draw from the obscurity which time has cast over them more particulars relating to this unhappy collision. Nor, indeed, should I have adverted to it, had it not operated strongly in preparing Mr. Hall for his removal from Bristol. Whatever regret it might occasion him, on subsequent meditation it excited no self-reproach, nor left any malevolent feeling. On the decease of Dr. Evans, which took place in 1791, his former colleague prepared an inscription for his monument; and he wrote the following letter to his brother-in-law, Mr. Isaac James, in reply to that which announced the doctor's death.

"DEAR BROTHER, "*Cambridge, Aug.* 12, 1791

"The contents of your letter received this day have affected me more than almost any thing of the kind I ever met with in my life. It is in all points of view a most solemn event; but, from obvious circumstances, to *me* it cannot fail of being peculiarly so. It is truly affecting to recollect the friendship that so long subsisted between us, and that it should end so unhappily in a breach that admits of no repair, no remedy! Yet, though I feel most pungently upon this occasion, I am happy to be able to join with you in declaring that my conscience is not loaded with guilt. Abating too much of an unhappy violence, I have the *mens conscia recti*. Were the circumstances to occur again, a breach would, as before, be inevitable. But though, in justice to myself, I say thus much, there is no one more disposed to lament the deceased than myself, or who has a truer sensibility of the real virtues of his character. I have written to Mr. Higgs, and therefore I need say the less to you upon these melancholy topics. The chief purpose, indeed, of my troubling *you* at present is to request you will be so kind as to give me the earliest and most particular account of every thing that passes at his funeral; the persons present, the sermon, the impression of the event, deep no doubt and awful, the whole state of things at Bristol, their future prospects and intentions, every thing relating to these matters that you know. The situation of the family and the church, though I doubt not I am the object of their joint abhorrence, I most sincerely compassionate. May God guide and comfort them. I think you and all my friends ought now to bury all that is past, and renew a connexion with the church, if their temper will permit you. My friends will *most oblige me* by carrying it respectfully to the doctor's family and memory. 'Anger may glance into the bosom of a wise man, but it rests only in the bosom of fools;' and our best improvement of the death of this useful servant of God will be to imitate his excellences and forget his errors. Pray write as soon as possible. I shall be extremely impatient till I hear. I am, dear brother,

"Your affectionate brother,

"*To Mr. Isaac James.*" "R. HALL."

Before this time it was generally apprehended that Mr. Hall's senti-

ments had, on some momentous points, deviated considerably from the accredited standards of even moderate orthodoxy; and he had given much pain to some of his Baptist friends on account of his views with regard to rebaptizing. Some correspondence took place between him and the Broadmead church on these subjects: and, as well that the sentiments he then really held may be known, as that the extent of his declension into positive error may be judged of from his own language, I shall here insert the frank exposition of his opinions, which he addressed to the church when he was on the eve of dissolving his connexion with it.

"My dear Brethren, "*Thursday, Dec. 9th*, 1790.

"Every token of your respect and attachment sensibly affects me; and, as you have requested me to explain myself on those sentiments to which I alluded as reasons of separation, I think it a duty I owe to myself and to you to give you all the satisfaction in my power.

"1st. In the first place, I am a firm believer in the proper divinity of Jesus Christ; in the merits of Christ as the sole ground of acceptance in the sight of God, without admitting works to have any share in the great business of justification; and in the necessity of Divine influence to regenerate and sanctify the mind of every man, in order to his becoming a real Christian. Thus far in the affirmative.

"2dly. In the second place, I am not a Calvinist, in the strict and proper sense of that term. I do not maintain the federal headship of Adam, as it is called, or the imputation of his sin to his posterity; and this doctrine I have always considered, and do still consider, as the foundation of that system. I believe we have received from our first parents, together with various outward ills, a corrupt and irregular bias of mind; but, at the same time, it is my firm opinion that we are liable to condemnation *only* for our own actions, and that *guilt* is a personal and individual thing. I believe in the doctrine of the Divine decrees, and of course in the predestination of all events, of which the number of the finally saved is one. But this appears to me a different thing from the doctrine of absolute election and reprobation, as it has ever been explained by Calvinists, which does not meet my approbation. Without going into a large field of metaphysical discussion, this is all I think it requisite to say respecting my orthodoxy; but there are two other points which have occasioned a good deal of conversation, and from some quarters a good deal of censure; upon which I shall therefore beg leave to explain myself in a few words.

"3dly. I am, and have been for a long time, a materialist, though I have never drawn your attention to this subject in my preaching: because I have always considered it myself, and wished you to consider it, as *a mere metaphysical speculation*. My opinion, however, upon this head is, that the nature of man is simple and uniform; that the thinking powers and faculties are the result of a certain organization of matter; and that after death he ceases to be conscious *until the resurrection*."

* * * * * * * * *

"Much has been said upon my opinions respecting baptism, and I am happy to have this opportunity of explaining my sentiments on that subject in particular, as it affects, not only the propriety of my former relation to this church, but of any future connexion I may form with any other Christian society. On this point much mistake, much misrepresentation, I hope not voluntary, has taken place; and on this account I trust you will excuse my dwelling upon it a little more particularly than its importance in other respects might seem to justify. It has been held out to the world by some that I am *not a Baptist*. I am, both in respect to the subject and to the mode of this institution, a Baptist. To apply this ordinance to infants appears to me a perversion of the intention of the sacred institution; and the primitive, the regular, and proper mode of administration I take to be *immersion*. Still it appears to me that sprinkling, though an innovation, does not deprive baptism of its essential validity, so as to put the person that has been sprinkled *in adult age* upon a footing with the unbaptized. The whole of my sen-

timents amounts to this,—I would not myself baptize in any other manner than by immersion, because I look upon immersion as the ancient mode, that it best represents the meaning of the original term employed, and the substantial import of this institution; and because I should think it right to guard against the spirit of innovation, which in positive rites is always dangerous and progressive: but I should not think myself authorized to rebaptize any one who has been sprinkled in adult age. I shall only remark, in addition to what I have already said upon this point, that if it be a sufficient objection to my union with a Baptist congregation; then, as all Christendom is composed of Baptists or Pedobaptists, it amounts to my exclusion, as a minister, from every Christian society throughout the whole earth: an interdict equally absurd and inhuman, founded upon a conduct merely negative in chimerical situations seldom or never likely to occur.

"I have thus, in compliance with your wishes, and with all the perspicuity in my power, in a few words explained to you my religious opinions, with a more particular view to the subjects on which I may be supposed most to err; and this avowal I have made, partly as a testimony of the respect I bear you, and partly to vindicate my character from any suspicion of ambiguity or reserve; but not at all with the remotest wish to win popularity or to court your suffrages; for at present it is as little in my power to accept any invitation to continue, as it may be in your inclination to give it, as I hold myself engaged in honour as a probationer for six months to a respectable society at Cambridge. May peace and prosperity attend you. "I am, your friend and brother,

"With the greatest respect,

"R. HALL."

The vexations and perplexities in which Mr. Hall had been for some time involved doubtless facilitated his removal to another sphere of action. And he who duly meditates upon the way in which the great Head of the church renders the movements of his providence subservient to his merciful purposes in redemption, will, I am persuaded, trace the superintending hand on this occasion.

Mr. Robinson, the pastor of the church at Cambridge with which Mr. Hall was now about to be connected, was a man of extensive powers, of some genius, and of considerable industry and research. Fascinating as a preacher, delightful as a companion, perseveringly skilful in the insinuation of his sentiments, his influence could not but be great. From the profession of orthodox opinions, he had passed by a rather rapid transition, not to Socinianism, but far beyond, to the very borders of infidelity; such, at least, was the substance of his declaration to Dr. Priestley, whom he *thanked* for preserving him from that awful gulf. Vain speculation was substituted for knowledge, faith, and experience: confession and prayer but seldom made a part of the public worship which he conducted, his effusions before sermon consisting almost altogether of ascriptions of praise; and the congregation became so transformed and deteriorated in consequence, that among the more intelligent classes, with only two or three exceptions, "he was esteemed the best Christian who was most skilled in disputation," not he who evinced most of the "spirit of Christ." The majority of the poorer members, however, escaped the contagion, and were ready to co-operate with the late Mr. Foster, who was then the senior deacon, and another of the deacons, who equally deplored the evils which had fallen upon them. Cordially attached to those doctrines which they regarded as fundamental, and therefore as constituting the basis of church union, they were preparing to call upon the whole body to consider the expediency of requesting Mr. Robinson to resign, when his sudden death at Birmingham, just after he had been preaching in Dr. Priestley's pulpit, rendered such a measure unnecessary. On the news of this event reaching Cambridge, Mr. Foster, who was then on his death-bed, made it his

last request to some of the most influential men in the church, that they would never consent to the appointment of a Socinian as Mr. Robinson's successor.

From this account of the state of the church at Mr. Robinson's decease, it will appear how difficult it was to select a successor who would be approved by all; how difficult, also, for that successor to walk steadily in the path of duty.

Mr. Hall, who by this time had attained a high reputation as a preacher, was invited, in June or July, 1790, to preach at Cambridge for one month; after which the invitation was renewed for a longer term. In July the following year, he was invited to take the pastoral charge: the letter announcing his acceptance of the important trust will be found in another part of this volume.*

In these transactions and their consequences *still* unfolding, the wisdom and mercy of God are strikingly manifested. There was at that time no man of eminence among the Baptists, besides Mr. Hall, who could for a moment have been thought of by the church at Cambridge as a fit successor to Mr. Robinson; nor was there any Baptist church and congregation with which *he* could become connected with the same prospect of being useful and happy, according to the views he then entertained. Had Mr. Hall's religious principles and feelings been such in 1790 and 1791 as they became a few years afterward, not even *his* talents would have made them palatable; and a connexion, had it been formed, would soon have been dissolved: on the other hand, had the church been decidedly and entirely Socinianized, he could not conscientiously have become its pastor. The providential correlation soon began to show itself. *Their* looseness of sentiment on many points, which even then he thought momentous, led him to enforce them frequently with the utmost energy; while *his* known freedom of opinion on other points, which they also had been led to canvass freely, preserved him from the odium of orthodoxy. Thinking themselves liberal and unshackled, they could not but congratulate one another that their new pastor, a man of splendid talents, was *almost* as liberal and unshackled as they were. Then again, their want of devotional seriousness, by the force of contrast, heightened his estimate of the value of true piety; and this produced an augmented earnestness and fidelity, which they first learned to tolerate, and afterward to admire. Thus, by the operation of an incessant action and reaction, continued for years, each party exerted a salutary influence on the other; and at length both church and pastor became so distinguished for piety, harmony, and affection, that they who had known and lamented their former state were compelled to exclaim, "This hath God wrought."

The death of Mr. Hall's father, which occurred in March, 1791, had indeed tended greatly to bring his mind to the state of serious thought with which he entered upon the pastoral office. Meditating with the deepest veneration upon the unusual excellences of a parent now for ever lost to him, he was led to investigate, with renewed earnestness, the truth as well as value of those high and sacred principles from which his eminent piety and admirable consistency so evidently flowed. He called to mind, too, several occasions on which his father, partly by the force of reason, partly by that of tender expostulation, had exhorted him to abandon the vague and dangerous speculations to which he was prone. Some important changes in Mr. Hall's sentiments resulted from an inquiry conducted under such solemn impres-

* See p. 209.

sions; and among these may be mentioned his renunc ation of *materialism*, which he often declared he "buried in his father's grave."

Attentive to the voice of heavenly admonition, thus addressing him from various quarters, he entered upon his new duties with earnest desires that he might be able "to commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God." Feeling that to him was consigned the charge of transforming, with God's assistance, a cold and steril soil into a fruitful field, he determined not to satisfy himself with half-measures, but proceeded to expose error, and defend what he regarded as essential truth. The first sermon, therefore, which he delivered at Cambridge, after he had assumed the office of pastor, was on the doctrine of the atonement, and its practical tendencies. Immediately after the conclusion of the service, one of the congregation, who had followed poor Mr. Robinson through all his changes of sentiment, went into the vestry, and said, "Mr. Hall, this preaching won't do for us: it will only suit a congregation of old women."—"Do you mean my sermon, sir, or the doctrine?"—"Your *doctrine*."—"Why is it that the *doctrine* is fit only for old women?"—"Because it may suit the musings of people tottering upon the brink of the grave, and who are eagerly seeking comfort."—"Thank you, sir, for your concession. The doctrine will not *suit* people of *any* age, unless it be true; and if it *be true*, it is not fitted for old women alone, but is equally important at *every* age."

This individual, and three or four other men of influence, with about twenty from the poorer classes, shortly afterward withdrew from the congregation, and met together on the Sunday evenings at a private house. The then Rev. William Frend, fellow and tutor of Jesus College, an avowed Socinian, became their religious instructer. This separate assembly, however, did not continue many months; for the person at whose house they met was, ere long, taken up and tried for sedition, and convicted; and the proceedings against Mr. Frend, on account of his pamphlet entitled "Peace and Union," which for so long a time kept the University of Cambridge in a state of great agitation, and which ended in his expulsion from it, drew away his attention from the little band of seceders.

Mr. Hall's ministerial labours, at this interesting period of his life, were blessed with the happiest results, when the benefit seemed likely to be for a while suspended by the intrusion of *violent* political discussion. The impression made throughout Europe by the French revolution of 1789 was such, that not merely here and there an individual indulged in political speculation, but almost every man threw himself into the vortex of controversy. The clergy of every order and station, the laity of every rank and class, yielded alike to the impulsion; and he who did not declare his decided and cordial adhesion to one or other of the contending parties might expect the censure of both, for his want of spirit or of principle. Cambridge, hitherto characterized as the whig university, was, at this epoch, split into the most violent party divisions, and the public was deluged with sermons from the pulpit, and pamphlets from the press, in which the respective advocates of "things as they are," and of "things as they should be," defended their opposite views with the utmost zeal. and too often with the most unbecoming rancour.

At such a season Mr. Hall, then under thirty years of age, was not likely to maintain an entire silence. When a man's quiescence was sufficient to render his principles equivocal, *he* was certainly not one who would make a secret of his opinions. He thought that political ethics had almost ceased to be referable to any principle of pure ethics.

He hesitated not to avow that the grand object of all good government must be to promote the happiness of the governed, to assist every individual in its attainment and security. He regarded a government chiefly anxious about the emoluments of office, or aiming to consolidate its own power at home and to aid the efforts of despots abroad, while it neglected the comfort and welfare of individuals in middle or lower life, whose burdens it augmented by a mistaken course, as a government that should be *constitutionally* opposed by every lawful means.

He gave to such subjects, also, more than political considerations. He looked upon those European governments which were founded on oppression, and trampled on the natural rights of man, as operating most fatally in the extinction of light and virtue. He regarded the conditions of those who tyrannize, and of those who are the objects of tyranny, as each productive of a numerous and distinct class of vices; and thought that the consequent darkness, ignorance, and criminality of the general mass under despotic governments, in great measure, if not entirely, incapacitated them for the pure and elevated enjoyments of heaven. It was hence a permanent conviction of his mind, "that he who is instrumental in perpetuating a corrupt and wicked government is also instrumental in unfitting his fellow-men for the felicity of the celestial mansions."* Could it then be matter of surprise that, believing and feeling all this, he should exult when "the empire of darkness and of despotism had been smitten with a stroke which sounded through the universe;" or, when other ministers of the gospel were signalizing themselves by opposing this view of things, that he should, for a short interval, be drawn aside from pursuits more congenial with his prevailing tastes, and, in some important respects, I think, more compatible with his holy calling, and at once endeavour to prove that "Christianity is consistent with a love of freedom," and that true Christianity will prevail most where genuine freedom is most diffused and best understood?

Cordial, however, as was Mr. Hall's attachment to a cause in which he conceived man's best interests to be closely interwoven, and strong as was his hatred of despotic measures, or what he regarded as such, either at home or abroad, I do not think that even their joint operation would have overcome his repugnance to writing, had it not been for skilful *abetters*, who first worked upon his feelings, and then extorted from him the promise of preparing a work for the public. Such, if I have not been misinformed, was the origin of his first political pamphlet; and such, I know, from his own declaration, often repeated, was the origin of the eloquent and powerful "Apology for the Freedom of the Press." The evening after the event occurred to which he alludes in the "Apology,"† he attended a periodical meeting of a book-society, constituted principally of members of his own congregation, and of Mr. Simeon's, and usually denominated *Alderman Ind's Club*, that distinguished ornament of Mr. Simeon's congregation being the treasurer. Every person present expressed himself in terms of the strongest indignation at the insult offered to Mr. Musgrave; every one thought it highly desirable that some man of talent *at Cambridge* should advocate the principles maintained by the friends of liberty, especially of those who avowed evangelical sentiments, and the necessity for their united activity, in the present state of the country and of Europe. Mr. Hall spoke as decidedly as any of them with regard to the urgent necessities of the case; when they all, having brought him precisely into the posi-

* See the splendid passage in vol. ii. p. 36-38. † See note in vol. ii. p. 59

tion at which they were aiming, exclaimed that it was he to whom alone they could look in this exigency. "Alderman Ind, you know, sir," said he, "was an excellent man; pure as a seraph, and gentle as a lamb. I thought that if *he* felt roused, if *he* could join with the rest in urging me, I might bring all hesitation to a truce; and so, in an evil hour, I yielded to their entreaties. I went home to my lodgings, and began to write immediately; sat up all night; and, wonderful for me, kept up the intellectual ferment for almost a month; and then the thing was done. I revised it a little as it went through the press; but I have ever since regretted that I wrote so hastily and superficially upon some subjects brought forward, which required touching with a master-hand, and exploring to their very foundations. So far as I understand the purely political principles which are advanced in that pamphlet, they are, I believe, correct: at all events they are mine still. But, I repeat it, I yielded in an evil hour; especially if I had any wish to obtain permanent reputation as a political writer. Perhaps, however, the pamphlet had its use in those perilous times." Such was Mr. Hall's account of this publication. How far it indicates the spirit of self-depreciation, in which, almost through life, he characterized his own productions, they who are best acquainted with the "Apology" will be most competent to decide; unless, indeed, their prepossessions and prejudices should disqualify them for deciding aright.

But, whatever might be Mr. Hall's opinion of this work, it does not seem to have been regarded by the public as of little value. Three editions were called for, I believe, within less than six months; and then, the author not sanctioning a republication, various editions were printed and circulated surreptitiously. Its more splendid and impressive passages were repeatedly quoted in the periodicals of the day, and many of its arguments were cited as perfectly conclusive. It was also widely circulated in America; and is there still regarded as having been powerfully influential in diffusing those liberal political principles which, of late, have acquired so marked an ascendency in Britain.

Mr. Hall, however, experienced such inconveniences from his political celebrity, as induced him to recede, not from his principles, or from the avowal of them in private, but from the further advocacy of them in public. It forced upon him the society of men whose conduct and character he could not approve; it tended to draw him, much more than he could conscientiously justify, from retirement and study; and thus, ere long he became of opinion, to adopt his own words, "that the Christian ministry is in danger of losing something of its energy and sanctity, by embarking on the stormy element of political debate." His elegant eulogium on Dr. Priestley,* in his first pamphlet, and the warm terms of admiration in which he used to speak of him in private, tempted many to fancy, and to say, that he also was a Socinian at heart; and although his preaching became more and more distinguished by the introduction and energetic application of evangelical truth, he still found himself often so equivocally placed as to render his denial of Socinianism quite imperative. On one of these occasions, Mr. Hall having, in his usual terms, panegyrized Dr. Priestley, a gentleman who held the doctor's theological opinions, tapping Mr. Hall upon the shoulder with an indelicate freedom from which he recoiled, said, "Ah! sir, we shall have *you* among us soon, I see." Mr. Hall, startled and offended by the rude tone of exultation in which this was uttered, hastily replied, "*Me* among *you*, sir! *me* among *you!* Why, if that

* See vol. ii. p. 23-26

were ever the case, I should deserve to be tied to the tail of the great red dragon, and whipped round the nethermost regions to all eternity!"

Notwithstanding the reasons Mr. Hall thus had for some degree of reserve, yet in this, as in every period of his life, he displayed a remarkable relish for social intercourse. He did not court the society of literary men; indeed, he rather shrank from it, because he felt the risk of having his thoughts too much engrossed by mere matters of language or of science: he had acquired enough of both to value them greatly; yet he desired to regard them principally as subservient to the higher purposes of his profession. Besides this, the philosophy of mind, in which he took extreme interest, was then but little cultivated at Cambridge. Happily, however, the leading individuals in his congregation were very intelligent and well-informed, able to appreciate his talents justly, and skilful in bringing his conversational powers into full action. With one or other of these he usually spent his evenings, selecting most frequently those who possessed the enjoyments of domestic life, and often stealing in earlier than he was expected, that he might for an hour share in the gambols and gayety of the children.

He was, but only for a short time, an imitator of Dr. Johnson. Some years afterward, when reminded of this, he replied, "Yes, sir: I aped Johnson, and I preached Johnson; and I am afraid with little more of evangelical sentiment than is to be found in his Essays: but it was youthful folly, and it was very great folly. I might as well have attempted to dance a hornpipe in the cumbrous costume of Gog and Magog. My puny thoughts could not sustain the load of the words in which I tried to clothe them."

There needed not, in truth, the principle of imitation to produce great similarity in some important respects between these two extraordinary men. They manifested the physical difference between a melancholic and a cheerful temperament; in consequence of which, the one was slow and measured in utterance, the other rapid and urgent. But, in conversation, both evinced a ready comprehension of the whole subject, a quick and decisive accuracy in answering, and a perfect self dependence. They both disliked a protracted debate, and would sometimes terminate a discussion, when it was growing tiresome, by a strong and pointed observation which it was difficult to encounter. Both were alike in exhibiting a rather more than ordinary degree of faith in things of a preternatural or mysterious description. In both, too, there were the similarities of acute intellect united with splendid imagination; and of a natural majesty of mental and moral genius which commanded veneration. But in the correction of his faults, and the improvement of his virtues, Mr. Hall possessed, in his superior piety, an immense advantage over Dr. Johnson.

In argument he was impetuous, and sometimes overbearing; but if he lost his temper he was deeply humbled, and would often acknowledge himself to blame. On one of these occasions, when a discussion had become warm, and he had evinced unusual agitation, he suddenly closed the debate, quitted his seat, and, retiring to a remote part of the room, was overheard by a lady, who was just entering, to ejaculate with deep feeling, "Lamb of God! Lamb of God! calm my perturbed spirit!"

Mr. Hall's personal habits, not only at the time of which I am now speaking, but in a certain degree through life, though not precisely those of an absent man, were those of one whose mental occupations kept his thoughts at a distance from various matters of ordinary observance, and made him regardless of a thousand things which most persons never forget. Thus, on his return from an evening visit, if not

watched, he would take a wrong hat or great-coat; if not sought after by some of the congregation, he would mistake the proper evening of a week-day service, having in such cases been so absorbed in study, as to lose a day in his reckoning;—for the same reason, he often mistook the day or the hour of an appointment; when on any of his journeys to London he engaged to take up the letters of his friends, it was not unusual, after his return, to find them all in his portmanteau, or in his great-coat pocket. These, or similar instances of forgetfulness, occurred daily; but, exciting the attention of his affectionate and watchful friends, they seldom exposed him to serious inconvenience.

None of these peculiarities sprang from an affectation of singularity; they simply marked an inattention to things of minor importance. Nor was there united with them a regardlessness of the proprieties of society, a disdain of such civilities and attentions as were usual in the classes with whom he most associated. He had never aimed to acquire a facility in the manners and habits of genteel life; but he had a native ease and grace, which was obviously distinguishable from any acquired habit. It was a grace that could neither be bought nor borrowed; on all proper occasions heightened by the dignity which naturally comported with his character and office; and uniformly blended with that genuine simplicity which often accompanies intellectual greatness, and is always, if I mistake not, an attribute of moral greatness.

Several particulars in the preceding account of Mr. Hall's first years at Cambridge will be illustrated by the following brief sketch, which I have received from a gentleman who had the most favourable opportunities, as well as the requisite taste and discrimination, for correctly estimating his character.

"I had but a slight acquaintance with Robert Hall from 1790 to 1793: from thence to the end of 1796 I knew him intimately. At that period his creed was imperfect, wanting the personality of the Holy Spirit, and wavering between the terrors of Calvin and the plausibilities of Baxter.* His infirmities, which were increasing, he concealed with dexterity, opposed with vigour, and sustained with uncommon patience. In his ministerial situation he was far from easy; and he was vehemently severe upon Robinson for leaving his church a wilderness, and bequeathing his successor a bed of thorns.

"His religious conversation in company was not frequent, and for the most part doctrinal; but, in private, his experimental communications were in beauty, elevation, and compass beyond all I ever heard. The memory of a man of seventy-three will not afford particulars; and the general impression can neither be obliterated nor expressed.

"In his manners he was a close imitator of Dr. Johnson; fond of tea-table talk, and of the society of cultivated females, who had the taste to lend him an ear, and the ability requisite to make attention a favour. He has confessed to me the taking thirty cups of tea in an afternoon, and told me his method was to visit four families, and drink seven or eight cups at each.

"He knew, as well as any man, what bad men were, and what good men should be; yet was often wrong in his judgment of individuals. From this deficiency in the knowledge of mankind, he sometimes trusted his false, and abused his true friends: when he perceived his error he changed his conduct, but, I suspect, very seldom confessed his mistake.

"He did not then read much; but was probably more hindered by pain than by indolence. A page, indeed, was to him more serviceable than a volume to many. Hints from reading or discourse, passing through his great mind, expanded into treatises and systems, until the adopted was lost in the begotten; so much so, that the whole appeared original. I am persuaded, however, that when I knew

* This phraseology will mark the bias of my truly respected correspondent.

him he had not, by many degrees, attained his meridian. I should regret my incapacity to do him justice, and give you assistance, were I not persuaded that only the bud was exhibited to me, while the bloom and the fruit were reserved for those more deserving to be happy."

I had the privilege of becoming first known to Mr. Hall in January, 1797. During that year we dined daily at the same table: the next year we met almost every morning to read together: and for some years afterward scarcely a week passed in which I was not three or four times in his society. When I first became acquainted with him I was young, and ignorant of nearly every thing but the most rudimental knowledge of language and science; of which I possessed just enough to employ as instruments of inquiry. I was eager to acquire information; but ran some risk of turning my mind to that which was useless, or merely showy, instead of directing its best energy to that which was truly valuable. In such circumstances, to be allowed the friendship and enjoy the advice and assistance of such a man was among my richest blessings. Scarcely a thought worth preserving, scarcely a principle of action worth reducing to practice, scarcely a source of true enjoyment, but I derived from him, or I was led to receive, or to appreciate more correctly through his agency. If, then, for some pages, my name should occur more often in immediate association with that of my beloved and reverend friend, than may seem consistent with ordinary rules, may I be freed from the charge of egotism? especially, if I assure the reader, that while nothing affords me more pleasure, nothing awakens more gratitude to the Father of Mercies, than the retrospect of the intellectual and higher than intellectual delights which were then mine, few things more humble me than the conviction that though I enjoyed them so long, I suffered them to pass away without commensurate improvement.

Mr. Hall kindly admitted me to the privacy of his study, in addition to the advantage of frequent intercourse with him in the society of his friends. Desirous to assist others in forming their estimate of this extraordinary individual, I shall not merely speak of his character, habits, and pursuits, but occasionally introduce some of his conversational remarks; confining myself, however, to such as from their brevity always occur to my thoughts in the *ipsissima verba* originally employed. If I do not succeed in depicting the man, which indeed I feel conscious is far beyond my powers, I may at least attempt to describe him as he then appeared to me.

When I first saw Mr. Hall I was struck with his well-proportioned athletic figure, the unassuming dignity of his deportment, the winning frankness which marked all that he uttered, and the peculiarities of the most speaking countenance I ever contemplated, animated by eyes radiating with the brilliancy imparted to them by benevolence, wit, and intellectual energy. When he spoke, except in the most ordinary chit-chat, to which however he seldom descended, he seemed not merely to communicate his words, but himself: and I then first learned the difference between one who feels while he is speaking, and whose communicative features tell you that he does, and one who after he has spoken long and with apparent earnestness still does not feel. I then learned also, that though talents may convey their results to others, and activity may carry on others in its stream; yet there is something distinct in the structure of a great mind which never can be so transferred to another as to become its native characteristic. Mr. Hall had a buoyancy and playfulness when among his select friends, which were remarkably captivating. Among strangers there was a reserve for a short time, but it was soon shaken off, especially if he found that they

were pious or intelligent. The presence of a man who gave himself airs of condescension usually induced him to remain silent or to retire. He could enjoy the society of men of moderate information; and it was interesting to observe how by a few apt questions he could ascertain in what direction their pursuits lay, and then so draw them out as to give them the pleasure of feeling that they were contributing to *his* stock of that knowledge which they could not but think useful. He was eminently alive to the emotions of pity, an affection always calculated to inspire attachment, but which, in a man of abstract habits is, I fear, very unusual. He was generous by nature, as well as upon principle, and in seasons of affliction would remarkably identify himself with those who most needed sympathy. He rather avoided than sought expressions of thankfulness; and sometimes when he became oppressed by them would hastily say, "Thank you, thank you; you have said more than enough; remember, God has sent into the world a more powerful and more noble sentiment than even gratitude."

For some years he made it a rule to pay a pastoral visit to every member of his church once each quarter. He did the same also with regard to such of his ordinary hearers as he thought willing to receive him as a minister of religion. These were not calls, but *visits*, and usually paid on evenings, that he might meet the whole assembled family. Among the lower classes, to make them quite at their ease, he would sit down with them at supper; and that this might involve them in no extra expense, he took care they should all know that he preferred a basin of milk.*

He persuaded the poorer members of his church to form little meetings, for reading, religious conversation, and prayer, going "from house to house." These were held once a fortnight, I think, in the summer time; once a week during the winter. He made it a point of official duty to attend them frequently; and regarded them, with the weekly meetings in the vestry, as the best thermometer for ascertaining the religious state of his people.

Proceeding thus, it was not surprising that he conciliated the affections of his friends, and secured the veneration of the pious; that he extended around him a growing conviction of his excellence, and carried on many in the stream of his mental and moral power.

In him all was at the utmost remove from gloom or moroseness. Even the raillery in which he indulged showed his good-nature, and was exceedingly playful; and, notwithstanding the avowed and lamented impetuosity in argument to which he was prone, nothing, so far as I ever saw, but conceit, ingrafted upon stupidity, provoked his impatience, and called forth a severity which he scarcely knew how to restrain.† With regard to disposition, the predominant features were kindness and cheerfulness. He never deliberately gave pain to any one, except in those few extreme cases where there appeared a moral necessity of "rebuking sharply" for the good of the offender. His kindness to children, to servants, to the indigent, nay, to animals, was uniformly

* The poorer widows of his flock were not forgotten in these periodical visits. To them, he said, he repaired for religious instruction, and was seldom disappointed. On such occasions he selected his ever favourite repast of *tea*. It was his practice to carry tea and sugar with him, taking especial care that there should be more than could possibly be needed, and asking permission to leave the remainder behind him.

† The following is an instance of his manner of checking inordinate vanity. A preacher of this character having delivered a sermon in Mr. Hall's hearing, pressed him, with a disgusting union of self-complacency and indelicacy, to state what he thought of the sermon. Mr. Hall remained silent for some time, hoping that his silence would be rightly interpreted; but this only caused the question to be pressed with greater earnestness. Mr. Hall, at length, said, "There was one very fine passage, sir."—"I am rejoiced to hear you say so. Pray, sir, which was it?"—"Why, sir, it was the passage from the pulpit into the vestry."

manifest. And such was his prevailing cheerfulness that he seemed to move and breathe in an atmosphere of hilarity, which indeed his countenance always indicated, except when the pain in his back affected his spirits, and caused his imagination to dwell upon the evils of Cambridgeshire scenery.

This was, in his case, far from a hypothetical grievance. It seriously diminished his happiness at Cambridge, and at length was the main cause of his quitting it. In one of my early interviews with him, before I had been a month at that place, he said to me, "What do you think of Cambridge, sir?"—"It is a very interesting place."—"Yes, the place where Bacon, and Barrow, and Newton studied, and where Jeremy Taylor was born, cannot but be *interesting*. But that is not what I mean; what do you say to the scenery, sir?"—"Some of the public buildings are very striking, and the college walks very pleasing; but—" and there I hesitated: he immediately added, "But there is nothing else to be said. What do you think of the surrounding country, sir? Does not it strike you as very insipid?"—"No, not precisely so." "Ay, ay: I had forgotten; you come from a flat country; yet you *must* love hills; there are no hills here." I replied, "Yes, there are; there are Madingley hill, and the Castle hill, and Gogmagog hill." This amused him exceedingly, and he said, "Why, as to Madingley, there is something in that; it reminds you of the Cottons, and the Cottonian Library; but that is not because Madingley is a high hill, but because Sir Robert Cotton was a great man; and even he was not born *there*. Then, as to your second example, do you know that the Castle hill is the place of the public executions? that is no very pleasant association, sir; and as to your last example, Gogmagog hill is five miles off, and many who go there are puzzled to say whether it is natural or artificial. 'Tis a dismally flat country, sir; dismally flat.* Ely is twelve miles distant, but the road from Cambridge thither scarcely deviates twelve inches from the same level; and *that's* not very interesting. Before I came to Cambridge I had read in the prize poems, and in some other works of fancy, of 'the banks of the Cam,' of 'the sweetly flowing stream,' and so on; but when I arrived here I was sadly disappointed. When I first saw the river as I passed over King's College Bridge, I could not help exclaiming, Why, the stream is standing still to see people drown themselves! and that, I am sorry to say, is a permanent feeling with me." I questioned the correctness of this impression, but he immediately rejoined, "Shocking place for the spirits, sir; I wish you may not find it so; it must be the very focus of suicides. Were you ever at Bristol, sir? there is scenery, scenery worth looking upon, and worth thinking of: and so there is even at Aberdeen, with all its surrounding barrenness. The trees on the banks of the Don are as fine as those on the banks of the Cam; and the river is alive, sir; it falls over precipices, and foams and dashes, so as to invigorate and inspire those who witness it. The Don is *a river*, sir, and the Severn is *a river;* but not even a poet would so designate *the Cam*, unless by an obvious figure he termed it the *sleeping* river."

The semi-playful and rapid manner in which he uttered things of this

* On Mr. Hall's last visit to Cambridge, one of his friends took him out for a morning's ride, and showed him the improvements as to cultivation, by means of new enclosures, &c. "True," said he, "but still there is that odious flatness, that insipid sameness of scenery all around." Then, with a tone of great seriousness, he added, "I always say of my Cambridge friends, when I witness their contentedness in such a country, 'Herein is the faith and patience of the saints!' *My* faith and patience could not sustain me under it, with the unvarying kindness of my friends in addition."

On another morning ride his companion said, "Look at these fields, with the crops of corn so smooth and so abundant; are not *they* pleasant? and do they not excite the idea of plenty?" He rejoined, with his usual promptness, "Oh! yes; and so does a large meal-tub filled to the brim But I was not thinking of *plenty*, but of *beauty*."

kind, did not always conceal the deep feeling of incurable and growing dislike with which he was struggling.

When I first became known to Mr. Hall, he had recently determined to revise and extend his knowledge in every department, "to re-arrange the whole furniture of his mind, and the economy of his habits," and to become a thorough student. He proposed devoting six hours a day to reading; but these, unless his friends sought after him, were often extended to eight or nine. He thought himself especially defective in a tasteful and critical acquaintance with the Greek poets; and said he should "once more begin at the beginning." He set to work, therefore, upon the best treatises on the Greek metres then extant. He next read the Iliad and Odyssey twice over, critically; proceeded with equal care through nearly all the tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides; and thence extended his classical reading in all directions. To the Latin and Greek poets, orators, historians, and philosophers he devoted a part of every day, for three or four years. He studied them as a scholar, but he studied them also as a moralist and a philosopher; so that, while he appreciated their peculiarities and beauties with his wonted taste, and carefully improved his style of writing and his tone of thinking, by the best models which they present, he suffered them not to deteriorate the accuracy of his judgment in comparing their value with that of the moderns. Perhaps, however, this assertion should be a little qualified: for, not only at the period of which I am now speaking, but, in great measure, through life, while he spoke of the Greek and Latin poetry in accordance with the sentiments and feelings of every competent classical scholar, he, with very few exceptions, unduly depreciated the poetry of the present times.

Much as he delighted in classical literature, he was by no means inclined, nor could he have reconciled it with his notions of duty, to circumscribe his reading within its limits. The early Christian fathers, the fathers of the Reformation, the theological writers, both puritan and episcopalian, of the seventeenth century, the most valuable authors on all similar topics down to the present time, including the most esteemed French preachers, were all perused with his characteristic avidity: what was most valuable in them became fixed in his unusually retentive memory; and numerous marginal and other references in the most valuable of his books prove at once the minuteness and closeness of his attention, and his desire to direct his memory to the substances of thought, and not unnecessarily to load it with mere apparatus.

Like many other men of letters, Mr. Hall, at this period, found the advantage of passing from one subject to another at short intervals, generally of about two hours: thus casting off the mental fatigue that one subject had occasioned by directing his attention to another, and thereby preserving the intellect in a state of elastic energy from the beginning to the end of the time devoted daily to study.

Not long after he had entered upon this steady course of reading, he commenced the study of Hebrew, under Mr. Lyons, who then taught that language in the university. He soon became a thorough proficient in it; and, finding it greatly to increase his knowledge of the Old Testament, as well as of its relation to the New, and considerably to improve and enlarge the power of Scripture interpretation, he, from thence to the close of life, suffered scarcely a day to pass without reading a portion of the Old Testament in the original. This practice flowed naturally from one of his principles of action, namely, to go to the fountain-head for information, rather than to derive it from the streams and from the continued application of that principle, it was found that his habit of reading originals often impaired the accuracy of his quota-

tion of passages from our authorized version, having, in fact, become more familiar with the Hebrew and Greek texts than with any translation. This, which was often conjectured by some of his hearers at Cambridge, was amply confirmed by the subsequent observation of his intimate and much esteemed friend Mr. Ryley, at Leicester.

It would be useless to record, even briefly, Mr. Hall's opinions of the numerous authors, ancient and modern, which he read at this period with such close attention, since they accord generally with those of all men of correct taste and sound judgment. Yet perhaps I may state, with regard to his chief uninspired favourite among the Greek writers, that to none of the ornaments of pagan antiquity did he refer in such terms of fervid eulogy as to Plato. Not Cudworth himself could appreciate him more highly. He often expressed his astonishment at the neglect into which he apprehended the writings of Plato were sinking; and said, that an entire disregard of them would be an irrefragable proof of a shallow age. Milton, he remarked, gave the noblest proofs, in his prose writings, of a knowledge and love of Plato; and he expressed a surprise, almost bordering upon contempt, in reference to those who classed this wonderful man with the schoolmen. It was his frequent remark, that even when Plato wrote upon the most abstract subjects, whether moral, metaphysical, or mathematical, his style was as clear as the purest stream, and that his diction was deeply imbued with the poetic spirit. On occasions when he ran no risk of the charge of pedantry, he would, by appropriate quotations, confirm these views. He delighted to expatiate upon this philosopher's notions of vice and virtue, of idleness and industry; and often adduced the Platonic definition of education, as "that which qualifies men to be good citizens, and renders them fit to govern or to obey." On one occasion he pointed to a passage, in the first Republic, I think, from which it appeared that Plato perceived the advantages resulting from *the subdivision of labour*, and suggested the natural progress of such subdivision in proportion to the advance of civilization.

In speaking of this philosopher, Mr. Hall illustrated his view of the evil of studying a Greek author with the aid of a Latin version, by a reference to *Serranus's* magnificent edition of his works, in the Latin version of which he said he had often detected errors. He also mentioned a ridiculous blunder of one of the English translators, who had, it seems, availed himself of a Latin version, in which, as was customary two or three hundred years ago, the omission of an *m* or an *n* was indicated by a bar placed over the preceding letter. Disregarding this superposed bar, the translator had read *hirudo* instead of *hirundo*, and thus, upon Plato's authority, declared the *horse-leech*, instead of the *swallow*, to be the harbinger of the spring!

I have dwelt rather longer upon these topics than would be at all necessary, were it not to correct the notion which some persons have entertained, that Mr. Hall was indolent, and that though when stimulated to the effort, he would exert himself as a profound thinker, yet he was not a man of research, or, in the ordinary acceptation, a good scholar.

When Mr. Hall proposed that we should devote an hour every morning to reading together, he asked me to assist him in his mathematical studies, adding that as a matter of mutual advantage, it might be well that, on alternate mornings, I should be his mathematical tutor, and he my instructer in metaphysics. To this proposal I gladly assented; and it has long been my persuasion that the scheme flowed in great measure from his desire to call my attention to general literature, and especially to the science of mind.

At that period, though he was strong and active, he often suffered

extremely from the pain to which I have before adverted, and which was his sad companion through life. On entering his room to commence our reading, I could at once tell whether or not his night had been refreshing; for, if it had, I found him at the table, the books to be studied ready, and a vacant chair set for me. If his night had been restless, and the pain still continued, I found him lying on the sofa, or more frequently upon three chairs, on which he could obtain an easier position. At such seasons, scarcely ever did a complaint issue from his lips; but, inviting me to take the sofa, our reading commenced. They, however, who knew Mr. Hall can conjecture how often, if he became interested, he would raise himself from the chairs, utter a few animated expressions, and then resume the favourite reclining posture. Sometimes, when he was suffering more than usual, he proposed a walk in the fields, where, with the appropriate book as our companion, we could pursue the subject. If *he* was the preceptor, as was commonly the case in these peripatetic lectures, he soon lost the sense of pain, and nearly as soon escaped from our author, whoever he might be, and expatiated at large upon some train of inquiry or explication which our course of reading had suggested. As his thoughts enkindled, both his steps and his words became quicker, until, ere long, it was difficult to say whether the body or the mind were brought most upon the stretch in keeping up with him. This peculiarity I have noticed in a few other men of vigorous intellect and lively imagination.

Mr. Hall's avowed object in recurring at all to his mathematical studies was, the acquisition of so much geometry, trigonometry, and conic sections as would enable him thoroughly to comprehend the entire scope of the reasoning in Maclaurin's "Account of Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophical Discoveries." For this, indeed, his college studies had in a great measure prepared him; and there would have been but little to learn, could he have been satisfied to proceed as students often do. But it was not in his nature to advance, unless he ascertained the firmness of the ground at every step. He reasoned philosophically, for instance, upon the nature of ratios and proportions; so that we had to clear our way through the recondite lectures of Barrow relative to those points, before we could advance to trigonometry. His logical habits, also, made him very reluctant to pass over any geometrical proposition in which he could not trace the analysis as well as the synthesis. In this manner, and with such views, we went through the proposed course. Of what utility all this was ultimately to Mr. Hall I cannot precisely say; but I can testify that it was of permanent advantage to his mathematical preceptor, who had not previously formed the habit of tracing apparent results to their foundations; but who, from that period, pursued science with a new interest, kept his eye more steadily upon ultimate principles, and learned to value such researches quite as much for their intellectual discipline as for their practical benefit.*

In reference to the philosophy of mind, after we had gone slightly over Locke's Essay, his Conduct of the Understanding, and Watts's Ontology, which I had read before, we studied Berkeley, Wollaston,

* Shortly after my removal to Woolwich, I invited my late valued friend Dr. Hutton to dine with Mr. Hall at my house. Mr. Hall, for the purpose of drawing the doctor into conversation, asked him a few questions suggested by some of Barrow's disquisitions in reference to mathematical measure, and its application to force, momentum, &c. They essentially involved the metaphysics of the subjects of inquiry. He also expatiated upon the imaginative as well as the rational process involved in the genesis of curves by motion, as taught by Barrow and Newton. The next day Dr. Hutton said to me, "What an extraordinary man that friend of yours is! Why, he was born to be a mathematician. If you could persuade him to give himself up to the sciences, as Priestley did, he would teach us all something."

Hartley, Andrew Baxter, Reid, some portions of Bacon's Essays, and of his Treatise on the Advancement of Learning; or rather, I should say, I had the advantage of learning what was most or least valuable in each and all of these, from this admirable living commentator. We were about to proceed to Search's (Abraham Tucker's) "Light of Nature,"* when some circumstances, which I cannot recall to mind, rendered it inconvenient for us thus to meet, and brought these delightful readings and commentaries to a close. We did not then go through any of Dugald Stewart's works, Mr. Hall regarding him as an elegant expositor of Reid, but greatly inferior in originality. From Bacon's Essays he used to read passages aloud, with the warmest expressions of commendation.

I must not omit to specify, as a peculiarity in the structure of Mr. Hall's mind, that although in every important case he detected, and placed in the utmost prominence, an essential defect in the reasoning, a too rapid generalization, or any other unwarrantable deduction, that occurred in Berkeley, or Watts, or Hartley, he was very slow to perceive, very reluctant to admit, any such in the writings of Andrew Baxter. The reader who is conversant with such speculations will recollect, that in the second volume of Baxter's book on "the Soul," he affirms that our dreams are prompted by separate immaterial beings, and defends his theory with much ingenuity. As we advanced in Baxter's arguments, Mr. Hall exclaimed, "This is very beautiful, sir; yet I apprehend there must be some flaw in the reasoning." I suggested one or two objections; he showed immediately that they could not apply. On our next meeting he accosted me with, "Well, sir, have you detected any fallacy in Baxter's theory?"—"Yes, I think I have." This, however, was soon disposed of, and then another, and another. I at length referred to Dugald Stewart's theory, after examining which, he said, "I do not think this is tenable; but I suppose it must be admitted that Baxter does not *quite* make out his case. Yet he was a man of great acumen—why did the Scotch philosophers run him down so?"

Still further to illustrate Mr. Hall's character, his turn of thought and expression, I will now bring together a few such incidents and short remarks, occurring between 1796 and 1803, as present themselves most vividly to my mind.

It will already have appeared that benevolence was a prevailing characteristic. When he had aided a poor man to the full extent of his own pecuniary means, he would sometimes apply to one of his affluent friends. "Poor ——— is in great distress: some of his family are ill, and he cannot supply proper necessaries. Lend me five shillings for the poor fellow: I will pay you again in a fortnight, unless in the mean time you find that the case deserves your help, and then the donation shall become yours."

His disapprobation of avarice bore a natural relation to his own benevolence. Being informed that a rich man in the neighbourhood, who was by no means celebrated for his liberality, had attended to a tale of distress without relieving it, he said, "Yes, yes: he would listen, but without inclining his head. He may lend a distant ear to the murmurings from the vale beneath, but he remains like a mountain covered with perpetual snow."

On another occasion, a person talking to him of one whom they both knew, and who was very penurious, said, "Poor wretch! you might put his soul into a nutshell."—"Yes, sir," Mr. Hall replied, "and even then it would creep out at a maggot hole."

His love of sincerity in words and actions was constantly apparent. Once, while he was spending an evening at the house of a friend, a lady who was there

* Mr. Hall characterized this as a work in which the noblest philosophy was brought down by a master-hand, and placed within the reach of every man of sound understanding.

on a visit, retired, that her little girl, of four years old, might go to bed. She returned in about half an hour, and said to a lady near her, "She is gone to sleep. I put on my night-cap, and lay down by her, and she soon dropped off." Mr. Hall, who overheard this, said, "Excuse me, madam: do you wish your child to grow up a liar?"—"Oh dear no, sir; I should be shocked at such a thing."—"Then bear with me while I say, you must never *act* a lie before her: children are very quick observers, and soon learn that that which assumes to be what it is not is a lie, whether acted or spoken." This was uttered with a kindness which precluded offence, yet with a seriousness that could not be forgotten.

His dislike to compliments was thus expressed:—"In compliments two and two *do not* make four; and twenty and twenty fall very far short of forty. Deal not, then, in that deceitful arithmetic."

It was said in Mr. Hall's hearing that "compliments were pleasing truths, and flatteries pleasing untruths." He remarked—"Neither of them are *pleasing* to a man of reflection, for the falsehoods in this case so nearly assume the semblance of truth, that one is perplexed to tell which is actually given; and no man is pleased with perplexity."

"You remember Mr. ———, sir."*—"Yes, very well."—"Were you aware of his fondness for brandy and water?"—"No."—"It was a sad habit; but it grew out of his love of story-telling; and that also is a bad habit, a very bad habit for a minister of the gospel. As he grew old, his animal spirits flagged, and his stories became defective in vivacity: he therefore took to brandy and water; weak enough, it is true, at first, but soon nearly 'half-and-half.' Ere long he indulged the habit in a morning; and when he came to Cambridge he would call upon me, and before he had been with me five minutes ask for a little brandy and water, which was, of course, to give him artificial spirits to render him agreeable in his visits to others. I felt great difficulty; for he, you know, sir, was much older than I was; yet, being persuaded that the ruin of his character, if not of his peace, was inevitable, unless something was done, I resolved upon one strong effort for his rescue. So the next time that he called, and, as usual, said, 'Friend Hall, I will thank you for a glass of brandy and water,' I replied, 'Call things by their right names, and you shall have as much as you please.'—'Why, don't I employ the right name? I ask for a glass of brandy and water.'—'That is the current, but not the appropriate name; ask for *a glass of liquid fire and distilled damnation*, and you shall have a gallon.' Poor man, he turned pale, and for a moment seemed struggling with anger. But, knowing that I did not mean to insult him, he stretched out his hand, and said, 'Brother Hall, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.' From that time he ceased to take brandy and water."

In one of my early interviews with Mr. Hall, I used the word felicity three or four times in rather quick succession. He asked, "Why do you say felicity, sir? Happiness is a better word, more musical, and genuine English, coming from the Saxon."—"Not more musical, I think, sir."—"Yes, more musical, and so are words derived from the Saxon generally. Listen, sir: 'My heart is smitten and withered like grass;' there's plaintive music. Listen again, sir: 'Under the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice;' there's cheerful music."—"Yes, but *rejoice* is French."—"True, but all the rest is Saxon, and rejoice is almost out of tune with the other words. Listen again: 'Thou hast delivered my eyes from tears, my soul from death, and my feet from falling;' all Saxon, sir, except *delivered*. I could think of the word tear, sir, till I wept. Then again, for another noble specimen, and almost all good old Saxon-English: 'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.'"

Shortly after this I was reading the original edition of Doddridge's Pneumatology, and asked Mr. Hall to lend me Kippis's edition, in which the references to other authorities, on the various topics discussed, are greatly increased. He told me that he did not possess Kippis's edition, in a tone which *then* surprised me a little, as it showed that he did not highly estimate Kippis's authority. I there-

* This was the individual referred to, p. 215.

fore asked, "Was not Dr. Kippis a clever man?"—"He might be a very clever man by nature, for aught I know, but he laid so many books upon his head that his brains could not move." This was to me, who, at that period, devoted much more time to reading than to thinking, an admirable lesson.

On being asked whether he was an Arminian or a Calvinist, he said, "Neither, sir, but I believe I recede further from Arminianism than from Calvinism. If a man profess himself a decided Arminian, I infer from it that he is not a good logician; but, sir, it does not interfere with his personal piety; look at good Mr. Benson, for example. I regard the question more as metaphysical than religious."

A lady who had been speaking of the Supreme Being with great familiarity, but in religious phraseology, having retired, he said, "I wish I knew how to cure that good lady of her bad habit. I have tried, but as yet in vain. It is a great mistake to affect this kind of familiarity with the King of kings, and speak of him as though he were a next-door neighbour, from the pretence of love. Mr. Boyle's well-known habit was infinitely to be commended. And one of our old divines, I forget which, well remarks that, 'Nothing but ignorance can be guilty of this boldness; that there is no divinity but in an humble fear, no philosophy but shows itself in silent admiration.'"

When two or three gentlemen were discussing the question, whether a man of no religion can be a successful minister of the gospel, surprise was expressed that Mr. Hall remained silent, "Sir," said he, in reply, "I would not deny that a sermon from a bad man may sometimes do good; but the general question does not admit of an argument. Is it at all probable, that one who is a willing servant of Satan (and that, you know, sir, is the hypothesis you assume) will fight *against* him with all his might, and if not, what *success* can be rationally expected?"*

Mr. Hall did not permit his sedulous cultivation of the mind to draw him aside from the cultivation of the heart. The evidences were, indeed, very strong, that his preparation for ministerial duty was devotional as well as intellectual. Thus, his public services, by a striking gradation, for months and years, evinced an obvious growth in mental power, in literary acquisition, and in the seriousness, affection, and ardour of a man of piety. His usefulness and his popularity increased; the church and congregation became considerably augmented; and in 1798 it was found necessary to enlarge the place of worship to accommodate about two hundred more persons.

Early in the year 1799, a severe fever, which brought him, in his own apprehension, and that of his friends, to the brink of the grave, gave him an opportunity of experiencing the support yielded by the doctrines of the Cross "in the near views of death and judgment." He "never before felt his mind so calm and happy." The impression was not only salutary, but abiding; and it again prompted him to the investigation of one or two points, with regard to which he had long felt himself floating in uncertainty. Although he had for some years steadily and earnestly enforced the necessity of Divine influence in the transformation of character, and in perseverance in a course of consistent, holy obedience, yet he spoke of it as "the influence of the Spirit of God," and never in express terms as "the influence of the Holy Spirit." The reason was, that though he fully believed the necessity of spiritual agency in commencing and continuing the spiritual life, he doubted the doctrine of the distinct personality of the Holy Spirit. But about this time he was struck with the fact that, whenever in private prayer he was in the most deeply devotional frame, "most overwhelmed with the sense that he was nothing, and God was all in all," he always felt himself inclined to adopt a Trinitarian doxology. This circumstance, occurring frequently, and more frequently meditated upon

* A few more miscellaneous gleanings from Mr. Hall's remarks in conversation are inserted in Appendix, Note A.

in a tone of honest and anxious inquiry, issued at length in a persuasion that the Holy Spirit is really and truly God, and not an emanation. It was not, however, until 1800 that he publicly included the personality of the Holy Spirit in his statements of the doctrine of spiritual influence.

In attempting to give some idea of the general character and style of Mr. Hall's public services, while I had the privilege of hearing him at Cambridge, I feel that I shall neither adequately describe what his preaching really was, nor even do justice to my own conceptions of it.

His manner of reading the Scriptures at the beginning of the service was not generally interesting; nor did the portion read always bear an obvious reference to the text or subject afterward brought forward. But when passages of Scripture were quoted in the sermon, they were so delivered as to give to their true meaning the most intelligible prominence and force.

His prayers were remarkable for their simplicity and their devotional feeling. No person could listen to them without being persuaded that he who uttered them was really engaged in prayer, was holding communion with his God and Father in Christ Jesus. His tones and his countenance throughout these exercises were those of one most deeply imbued with a sense of his unworthiness, and throwing himself at the feet of the Great Eternal, conscious that he could present no claim for a single blessing but the blood of atonement, yet animated by the cheering hope that the voice of that blood would prevail. The structure of these prayers never indicated any preconceived plan. They were the genuine effusions of a truly devotional spirit, animated by a vivid recollection of what in his own state, in that of the congregation, of the town and vicinity, needed most ardently to be laid before the Father of Mercies. Thus they were remarkably comprehensive, and furnished a far greater variety on the successive occasions of public worship, than those of any other minister whom I have ever known. The portions which were devoted to intercession operated most happily in drawing the affections of his people towards himself; since they showed how completely his Christian sympathy had prepared him to make their respective cases his own.

The commencement of his sermons did not excite much expectation in strangers, except they were such as recollected how the mental agitation, produced by diffidence, characterized the first sentences of some of the orators of antiquity. He began with hesitation, and often in a very low and feeble tone, coughing frequently, as though he were oppressed by asthmatic obstructions. As he proceeded, his manner became easy, graceful, and at length highly impassioned; his voice also acquired more flexibility, body, and sweetness, and in all his happier and more successful efforts, swelled into a stream of the most touching and impressive melody. The further he advanced, the more spontaneous, natural, and free from labour seemed the progression of thought. He announced the results of the most extensive reading, of the most patient investigation, or of the profoundest thinking, with such unassuming simplicity, yet set them in such a position of obvious and lucid reality, that the auditors wondered how things so simple and manifest should have escaped them. Throughout his sermons he kept his subject thoroughly in view, and so incessantly brought forward new arguments, or new illustrations, to confirm or to explain it, that with him amplification was almost invariably accumulative in its tendency. One thought was succeeded by another, and that by another and another, each more weighty than the preceding, each more calculated

to deepen and render permanent the ultimate impression. He could at pleasure adopt the unadorned, the ornamental, or the energetic; and indeed combine them in every diversity of modulation. In his higher flights, what he said of Burke might, with the slightest deduction, be applied to himself—"that his imperial fancy laid all nature under tribute, and collected riches from every scene of the creation, and every walk of art;"* and at the same time, that could be affirmed of Mr. Hall which could *not* be affirmed of Mr. Burke—that he never fatigued and oppressed by gaudy and superfluous imagery. Whenever the subject obviously justified it, he would yield the reins to an eloquence more diffusive and magnificent than the ordinary course of pulpit instruction seemed to require; yet so exquisite was his perception of beauty, and so sound his judgment, that not the coldest taste, provided it were real taste, could ever wish an image omitted which Mr. Hall had introduced. His inexhaustible variety augmented the general effect. The same images, the same illustrations scarcely ever recurred. So ample were his stores, that repetition of every kind was usually avoided; while in his illustrations he would connect and contrast what was disjointed and opposed, or distinctly unfold what was abstracted or obscure, in such terms as were generally intelligible, not only to the well-informed but to the meanest capacity. As he advanced to his practical applications, all his mental powers were shown in the most palpable but finely balanced exercise. His mind would, if I may so speak, collect itself and come forth with a luminous activity, proving, as he advanced, how vast, and, in some important senses, how next to irresistible those powers were. In such seasons his preaching communicated universal animation: his congregation would seem to partake of his spirit, to think and feel as he did, to be fully influenced by the presence of the objects which he had placed before them, fully actuated by the motives which he had enforced with such energy and pathos.

All was doubtless heightened by his singular rapidity of utterance,—by the rhythmical structure of his sentences, calculated at once for the transmission of the most momentous truths, for the powers of his voice, and for the convenience of breathing freely at measured intervals,—and, more than all, by the unequivocal earnestness and sincerity which pervaded the whole, and by the eloquence of his most speaking countenance and penetrating eye. In his sublimer strains, not only was every faculty of the soul enkindled and in entire operation, but his very features seemed fully to sympathize with the spirit, and to give out, nay, to *throw* out, thought, and sentiment, and feeling.

From the commencement of his discourse an almost breathless silence prevailed, deeply impressive and solemnizing from its singular intenseness. Not a sound was heard but that of the preacher's voice—scarcely an eye but was fixed upon him—not a countenance that he did not watch, and read, and interpret, as he surveyed them again and again with his rapid, ever-excursive glance. As he advanced and increased in animation, five or six of the auditors would be seen to rise and lean forward over the front of their pews, still keeping their eyes upon him. Some new or striking sentiment or expression would, in a few minutes, cause others to rise in like manner: shortly afterward still more, and so on, until, long before the close of the sermon, it often happened that a considerable portion of the congregation were seen standing;—every eye directed to the preacher, yet now and then for a moment glancing from one to another, thus transmitting and reciprocating thought and feeling:

* See vol. ii. p. 69.

Mr. Hall himself, though manifestly absorbed in his subject, conscious of the whole, receiving new animation from what he thus witnessed, reflecting it back upon those who were already alive to the inspiration, until all that were susceptible of thought and emotion seemed wound up to the utmost limit of elevation *on earth*,—when he would close, and they reluctantly and slowly resume their seats.*

Scenes like this I have witnessed repeatedly, so productive of intense and hallowed feeling, that after an interval of more than thirty years they present themselves to my mind with a more vivid influence than many of the transactions of the last month.

And surely the delightful retrospection may be safely indulged, when it is considered that these sublime exertions were made for the promotion of man's best interests—to warn the impenitent—to show to the sinner the fatal error of his way—to invite the self-condemned to the only, the all-effectual remedy—to console and encourage the faithful—to distribute the bread of life among those who must otherwise perish—to "build up the church in her most holy faith;" when it is known, also, that while men of taste and intellect were both gratified and instructed, the uncultivated rustic heard, and understood, and received the Word of Life, and went on his way rejoicing. Numerous and diversified as were the feelings excited by this extraordinary preacher, none were more prevailing than surprise that one so richly endowed should seem so utterly unconscious of it, and gratitude that the Great Head of the church should have called such a man to his service, and placed him in so important a station as Cambridge, when his intellectual powers were in their full maturity and vigour.

I must not, I perceive, allow myself to sketch the difference between his sermons and his expositions, or between his preaching at Cambridge and in the neighbouring villages: nor must I dwell upon the weekly evening services, when he met a few of his people, chiefly of the poorer classes, in the vestry of his place of worship, and, in a strain of the most chaste and simple eloquence, comforted and instructed them in the "things pertaining to the kingdom of God."† The diversity of his powers, the sincerity of his character, the warmth of his love to God and man, were in all alike apparent: and no one that was not the victim of prejudice, or the slave of sin, could have seen him engaged in the service of God without being ready to testify, "this man must have read much, thought much, and prayed much," to be thus admirably furnished for his great work.

* Striking evidences of the most stimulating immediate impression often occurred. I specify only two examples.

In 1812, Mr. Hall, who then resided at Leicester, paid one of his periodical visits to Bristol, and, as usual, often preached at Broadmead. He delivered a most solemn and impressive sermon on the text "Dead in trespasses and sins;" of which the concluding appeals were remarkably sublime and awful. The moment he had delivered the last sentence, Dr. Ryland, then the pastor of the church, hastened part of the way up the pulpit stairs, and while the tears trickled down his venerable face, exclaimed, with a vehemence which astonished both the preacher and the congregation,—"Let all that are alive in Jerusalem pray for the dead, that they may live!"

In 1814, Mr. Hall, while preaching among his old friends at Cambridge, just before he commenced the application of his sermon, uttered a short but very fervent ejaculatory prayer, during which the whole congregation arose from their seats. Mr. Hall seemed surprised for a moment, and but for a moment, and remained in prayer for about five minutes. He then resumed his sermon, and continued preaching for more than twenty minutes, in such a strain of magnificent and overwhelming eloquence, as the extraordinary incident might be expected to produce from powers and feelings like his, the whole congregation standing until the close of the sermon.

† The topics of these evening lectures were often biographical. The lives and characters of Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Elijah, Hannah, Samuel, Ruth, Daniel, &c. were briefly delineated, and made the basis of some useful practical reflections. Whenever the subject would fairly allow it, these reflections had an appropriate bearing upon the duties, the trials, and perplexities of persons in humble life. The sermon on "John fulfilled his course," inserted in the present volume, is very analogous in its character to the discourses to which I here refer; but its commencement is more elaborate.

It would be highly instructive and gratifying to know by what process so finished a preacher, so exquisite and tasteful a writer, as Mr. Hall, prepared his respective compositions for the pulpit and the press. But the reluctance with which he spoke either of himself or of his occupations, deprives us of much of this desirable information. At the time when our intercourse was most frequent and unrestrained, I have often been with him while he was preparing for the pulpit, and have occasionally ventured to ask him a few questions; his answers, always frank and elucidatory, however concise, enabled me, by means also of frequent reference to his notes on different sermons which I heard delivered, to form tolerably satisfactory conjectures as to the course pursued. He then stated, as he since has to different friends, that he never proceeded even to think of adopting a specific text, as fitted for a sermon, until the matter it presented stood out in the form of a particular, distinct, and precise topic; he could then take it up and lay it down as he pleased. Of his extraordinary power of abstraction I have already spoken.* By its means he could, at pleasure, insulate, nay in a manner enclose himself, from every thing around him; and thus pursue his mental operations. It was usual with him to have five or six subjects under simultaneous training; to either of which he could direct his attention as inclination or necessity required. The grand divisions of thought, the heads of a sermon, for example, he would trace out with the most prominent lines of demarcation; and these for some years supplied all the hints that he needed in the pulpit, except on extraordinary occasions.† To these grand divisions he referred, and upon them suspended all the subordinate trains of thought. The latter, again, appear to have been of two classes altogether distinct; outline trains of thought, and trains into which much of the detail was interwoven. In the outline train, the whole plan was carried out and completed as to the argument; in that of detail, the illustrations, images, and subordinate proofs were selected and classified; and in those instances where the force of an argument, or the probable success of a general application, would mainly depend upon the language, even that was selected and appropriated, sometimes to the precise collocation of the words. Of some sermons, no portions whatever were wrought out thus minutely, the language employed in preaching being that which spontaneously occurred at the time; of others, this minute attention was paid to the verbal structure of nearly half: of *a few*, the entire train of preparation, almost from the beginning to the end, extended to the very sentences. Yet the marked peculiarity consisted in this, that the process, even when thus directed to minutiæ in his more elaborate efforts, did not require the use of the pen; at least at the time to which these remarks principally apply.‡ For Mr. Hall had a singular faculty for continuous mental composition, apart from the aid which writing supplies. Words were so disciplined to his use, that the more he thought on any subject the more closely were the topics of thought associated with appropriate terms and phrases; and it was manifest that he had carefully disci-

* See vol. i. p. 21.

† As an example, both of a comprehensive miniature outline, and of provision in the notes for accurate expression, where he wished to state with clearness and precision his theological sentiments on a most momentous point, see Mr. Hall's own analysis of the sermon on John i. 35, 36, at p. 429 of this volume, and the language actually employed in the sermon itself, p. 438.

‡ Mr. Hall, doubtless, varied his manner of preparation in different periods. For three or four years after his settlement at Leicester, he wrote down nearly a third of the sermon, and left all the rest to flow from the outline plan while he was preaching. But for some years afterward he seldom allowed his notes to exceed two pages, and is thought to have indulged himself more than at any other period of his life in entirely extemporaneous eloquence. At that time his sermons were especially distinguished by simplicity and pathos.

plined his mind to this as an independent exercise, probably to avoid the pain and fatigue which always attended the process of writing. Whenever he pleased, he could thus pursue the consecution to a great extent, in sentences, many of them perfectly formed and elaborately finished, as he went along, and easily called up again by memory, as occasion required; not, however, in their separate character, as elements of language, but because of their being fully worked into the substance of thought. It hence happened that the excellence which other persons often attain as to style, from the use of the pen, in written, visible composition (employing the eye upon words, instead of fixing the memory upon substantial mental product, and, it may be, diminishing the intellectual power by substituting for one of its faculties a mechanical result), he more successfully and uniformly obtained by a purely meditative process. And I am persuaded that if he could have *instantly* impressed his trains of thought upon paper, with the incorporated words, and with the living spirit in which they were conceived, hundreds if not thousands of passages would have been preserved, as chaste and polished in diction, as elastic and energetic in tone, as can be selected from any part of his works. What, however, could not thus be accomplished by the pen has been achieved, as to immediate impression, in the pulpit; and hence his celebrity, unequalled, in modern times, as a sacred orator.

In preparing for the press the process was in many respects essentially different. There was, from the outset, a struggle to overcome the reluctance to write, arising from the anticipation of increased pain, which he knew *must* be endured so long as he was engaged in the mechanical act; and at every return to the labour he had a new reluctance to surmount. There was, moreover, the constant effort to restrain a mind naturally active, ardent, and rapid in all its movements, to a slow progression; nay, a further effort, and, to a mind so constituted, a very irksome one, to bring the thoughts back from the ultimate issue to which they were incessantly hastening, and cause them to pass and repass, again and again, by a comparatively sluggish course, the successive links in a long chain. Nor was this all. He had formed for himself, as a writer, an ideal standard of excellence which could not be reached:* his perception of beauty in composition was so delicate and refined, that in regard to his own productions it engendered perhaps a fastidious taste; and, deep and prevailing as was his humility, he was not insensible to the value of a high reputation, and therefore cautiously guarded against the risk of diminishing his usefulness among certain classes of readers, by consigning any production to the world that had not been thoroughly subjected to the *labor limæ*. Hence the extreme slowness with which he composed for the press; writing, improving, rejecting the improvement; seeking another, rejecting it; recasting whole sentences and pages; often recurring precisely to the original phraseology; and still oftener repenting, when it was too late, that he had not done so. All this he lamented as a serious defect, declaring that he gave, in his own view, to his written compositions, an air of stiffness and formality, which deprived him of all complacency in them. And I cannot but think that, notwithstanding the exquisite harmony and beauty which characterize every thing that he has published, they were even, in point of felicity of diction, and the majestic current and force of language, inferior to the "winged words" that escaped from his lips, when "his soul was enlarged" in the discharge of ministerial duty

* "I am tormented with the desire of writing better than I can."—P 240.

May we not suggest a probable reason for this, by observing that when Mr. Hall stood forth as the minister of the sanctuary, he placed the fire upon the altar in the humble confidence that it would be kept alive by the communication of grace and spirit from on high; but that, when he came before the public as an author, he sometimes extinguished his own flame, pure and ethereal as it notwithstanding was, in his efforts to ornament the vase in which he held it up to view.*

But I must not dwell longer on these topics.

In the beginning of the year 1799, Mr. Hall had the happiness of renewing personal intercourse with his early friend. Mr. (afterward Sir James) Mackintosh, being about to deliver a course of lectures on the Law of Nature and Nations, in Lincoln's Inn Hall, deemed it expedient, for the completion of some of the extensive researches which that important undertaking required, to reside for a few months at Cambridge, that he might consult the more valuable of the college libraries, as well as the public library belonging to the university generally. Another distinguished individual, the late Dr. Samuel Parr, spent several weeks at Cambridge at the same time, for the purpose of visiting some of his old friends, of associating with Mr. Mackintosh, and of becoming personally acquainted with Mr. Hall, whose character he had long known and highly valued. Mr. Hall, pleased to refresh his spirits in the society of his beloved fellow-student, and by no means unwilling to glean something from the stores of so profound a scholar as Dr. Parr, often spent his evenings with these two eminent men, and a few members of the university, who were invited to their select parties, and with whom, from that time, he cultivated an intimacy.

This circumstance led to the formation of Mr. Hall's most inveterate habit,—that of smoking. Previously to this period, he had always censured the practice in the strongest terms; but, on associating with Dr. Parr, his aversion to what he used to denominate "an odious custom," soon passed away. The doctor was always enveloped in a dense cloud of smoke from sunrise until midnight; and no person could remain in his company long without great inconvenience, unless he learned to smoke in self-defence. Mr. Hall, therefore, made the attempt, and quickly overcame every obstacle. I well recollect entering his apartment just as he had acquired this happy art; and, seeing him sit at ease, the smoke rising above his head in lurid, spiral volumes, he inhaling and apparently enjoying its fragrance, I could not suppress my astonishment. "O, sir," said he, "I am only qualifying myself for the society of a doctor of divinity; and this," holding up the pipe, "is my test of admission."

Mr. Hall's Cambridge friends were divided in their feelings and wishes with regard to this new practice. The majority approved it, from a belief that the narcotic influence of tobacco would mitigate the pain which he had so long endured. Others, apprehending that his habit of converting *every thing* into a source of enjoyment would transform him into an unremitting smoker, and that injury to his health would ensue, ventured to expostulate with him. I belonged to the latter class, and put into his hands Dr. Adam Clarke's pamphlet on "The Use and Abuse of Tobacco," with a request that he would read it. In a few days he returned it, and at once, as if to preclude discussion, said, "Thank you, sir, for Adam Clarke's pamphlet. I can't refute his arguments, and I can't give up smoking."

* That Mr. Hall did not always require much time for the production of elegant and spirited writing, interspersed with passages of remarkable beauty, and of the most elaborate polish, is plain from his two earliest publications, both composed *currente calamo*, and each yielding as powerful and finished specimens of style and thought as can be drawn from his works

We now approach the time when Mr. Hall acquired a signal extension of celebrity. Many who had hailed the French Revolution of 1789 as an event productive of extensive benefit, were compelled to admit, after a few years, that the great leaders in that revolution; and still more their followers, committed grievous blunders, and grosser crimes, from the want of higher than political principles to control their actions. Yet, in the false security which some felt, and others insidiously aimed to inspire, it was suspected by but few that much of our periodical literature had, under the plea of encouraging free discussion, become irreligious in its tendency, and that various unprincipled demagogues in London and the large manufacturing towns, not only held up to admiration the conduct of the detestable actors in "the reign of terror," but were constantly exerting themselves to disseminate democracy and atheism conjointly. Such, however, was the fact. From 1795 to 1799, debating rooms were opened in various parts of the metropolis, in which the most barefaced infidelity was taught, and to which the lower classes were invited, often on Sunday evenings, by a variety of specious allurements. Mr. Hall was no sooner aware of the existence of these sources of evil, and of the mischief they produced, than he began to use the voice of warning, in his private intercourse among his people, and to impress upon such of the young as he feared had received a skeptical bias, that of all fanaticism the fanaticism of infidelity then prevalent was at once the most preposterous and the most destructive.

Mr. Hall's persuasion of the continuance and growth of this infidel spirit induced him to preach and publish his celebrated sermon on "Modern Infidelity;" which was not, therefore, as many affirmed, a hasty production, written under excited feelings and false alarms, but the deliberate result of a confirmed belief that the most strenuous efforts were required to repel mischief so awfully and insidiously diffused.

Before the publication of this sermon, its author had fully "counted the cost" as to the obloquy which it would bring upon him from various quarters; but he did not at all anticipate its extraordinary success, and the corresponding extension of his reputation. As repeated editions were called for, he yielded his assent with great hesitation, from a fear that the copies would remain unsold; and he was the last to see, what every one else perceived, that it had carried his celebrity as a profound thinker and eloquent writer far beyond the limits of the denomination to which he was so bright an ornament.

Immediately after this sermon issued from the press, the consistency and integrity of the author were vehemently attacked in several letters which appeared in the "Cambridge Intelligencer," then a popular and widely circulated newspaper. Its editor, Mr. Flower, had received in an ill spirit Mr. Hall's advice that he would repress the violent tone of his political disquisitions, and had, from other causes which need not now be developed, become much disposed to misinterpret his motives and depreciate his character. He therefore managed to keep alive the controversy for some months, occasionally aiding, by his own remarks, those of his correspondents who opposed Mr. Hall, and as often casting illiberal insinuations upon the individual who had stepped forward in defence of the sermon and its author. A few months after this discussion subsided, Mr. Flower, who had been summoned before the House of Lords, and imprisoned in Newgate for a libel on Bishop Watson, published an exculpatory pamphlet; in which, with a view to draw the attention of the public as speedily as possible from his own unmanly and disingenuous conduct, while at the bar of the House, he

soon passed from his personal defence to a virulent attack upon Mr. Hall, his former pastor.

Shortly afterward, another controvertist, a Mr. Anthony Robinson, unwilling that Mr. Flower and his coadjutors should gather all the laurels in so noble a conflict, hastened into the field; and, it must be admitted, left them far behind. He published, in a pamphlet of more than sixty pages, "An Examination" of Mr. Hall's Sermon. He did not bring against the preacher the positive charge of apostacy, having discrimination enough to see that it was one thing to refer the atrocities of the reign of terror to the political principles of the perpetrators, and quite another to ascribe them to their avowed and unblushing atheism. But the crimes that he imputed to Mr. Hall were, that he was "an imitator of Mr. Burke," that he was "fierce and even savage in expression," that his "charges against atheism are unfounded," and that he taught "that it was excusable, if not meritorious, to punish men for errors in religious opinions!" For himself, he maintained, that "all men are essentially alike in moral conduct;" that the sum of all the morality of religionists is, "do good unto the household of faith, and to them only; kill, plunder, calumniate the heretics;" that "all public religions are opposed to all private morality;" that "atheism, on the contrary, tends but little to alter our moral sentiments;" and that "all religions except the belief that rewards are to be conferred upon the beneficent, and for that service exclusively, are not merely as bad, but *infinitely worse than any kind or degree of skepticism;*" because "atheism leaves every human present motive *in full force*, while every religion or mode of faith different from what is above expressed changes the name and the nature of morality, saps the foundations of all benevolence, and introduces malice, hostility and murder, *under the pretext of love to God.*" This being a fair specimen of the shameless impiety with which the press then teemed, we need not wonder at the applauses bestowed upon Mr. Hall for advancing with such singular talent and ability to stem the torrent.

With the exception of a few letters from private friends, who disapproved of his denominating the Roman Catholic clergy "the Christian priesthood," every communication he received was highly gratifying, especially as it did justice to his motives. The most distinguished members of the university were loud in his praises: numerous passages in the sermon, which were profound in reasoning, or touching and beautiful in expression, were read and eulogized in every college and almost every company; and the whole composition was recommended in the charges and sermons of the dignified and other clergy in terms of the warmest praise. The "Monthly Review" (then the leading critical journal), the "British Critic" (at that time under the able superintendence of Dr. Nares), and other Reviews, gave to the sermon the highest commendation. Kett in his "Elements of General Knowledge," William Belsham in his "History of Great Britain," Dr. Parr in the notes to his celebrated "Spital Sermon," and many others, were profuse in their expressions of panegyric. From that time Mr. Hall's reputation was placed upon an eminence which it will probably retain as long as purity and elevation of style, deeply philosophical views of the springs and motives of action, and correct theological sentiments are duly appreciated in the world.*

* That the reader may be put in possession of what was most interesting in the panegyrical notices to which I have above alluded, I shall insert the substance of two reviews written by Sir James Mackintosh, and of the often-cited note of Dr. Parr, neither of which is now easily attainable, in a note at the end of this Memoir. See Note B, Appendix.

Of the letters received by Mr. Hall on this occasion, the following from the pen of his friend Mackintosh has escaped the ravages of time.

"*Serle-street, Lincoln's Inn,*
"DEAR HALL, "*26 March*, 1800.

"FROM the enclosed letter, you will see the opinion which the Bishop of London* has formed of your sermon, and you will observe that he does some justice to your merit. Mr. Archdeacon Eaton, to whom the letter was written, has allowed me to send it to you; and I thought it might not be disagreeable to you to have it, as the opinion of a man, not indeed of very vigorous understanding, but an elegant writer, a man of taste and virtue, not to mention his high station in the church.

"I last night had a conversation about the sermon with a man of much greater talents, at a place where theological, or even literary discussions are seldom heard. It was with *Mr. Windham, at the Duchess of Gordon's rout.* I asked him whether he had read it. He told me that he had, that he recommended it to everybody; and, among others, on that very day, to the new Bishop of Bangor,† who had dined with him. He said that he was exceedingly struck with the style, but still more with the matter. He particularly praised the passage on vanity as an admirable commentary on Mr. Burke's observations on vanity in his character of Rousseau. He did not like it the worse, he said, for being taken from the source of all good, as he considered Mr. Burke's works to be. He thought, however, that you had carried your attack on vanity rather too far. He had recommended the sermon to Lord Grenville, who seemed skeptical about any thing good coming from the pastor of a Baptist congregation, especially at Cambridge.

"This, you see, is the unhappy impression which Priestley has made, and which, if you proceed as you have so nobly begun, you will assuredly efface. But you will never do all the good which it is in your power to do, unless you assert your own importance, and call to mind that, as the dissenters have no man comparable to you, it is your province to guide them, and not to be guided by their ignorance and bigotry. I am almost sorry you thought any apology due to those senseless bigots who blamed you for compassion [towards] the clergy of France,‡ as innocent sufferers and as martyrs of the Christian faith during the most barbarous persecution that has fallen upon Christianity, perhaps since its origin, but certainly since its establishment by Constantine. * * * * * * * * * * * * * * I own I thought well of Horsley when I found him, in his charge, call these unhappy men 'our Christian brethren:' the bishops and clergy of the persecuted church of France! This is the language of truth. This is the spirit of Christianity.

"I met with a combination in Ovid, the other day, which would have suited your sermon. Speaking of the human descendants of the giants, he says—

'Sed et illa propago
Contemptrix superûm, sævæque avidissima cædis
Et violenta fuit. Scires è sanguine notos.'—MET. I. 160.

"The union of ferocity with irreligion is agreeable to your reasoning.

"I am going to send copies of my third edition§ to Paley and Watson, to Fox and the lord-chancellor.‖ I should like to send copies of your sermon with them. If you will direct six copies to be sent here, I shall distribute them in such a manner as will, I think, not be hurtful.

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On the publication of Dr. Parr's "Spital Sermon," I took a copy of it to Mr. Hall; and sat down at his table while he hastily turned over the leaves. He was greatly amused by the cursory examination, but had evidently no expectation that any of the notes referred to himself. "What a profusion of Greek, sir! Why, if I were to write so, they would call me a pedant; but it is all natural in Parr." "What a strange medley, sir. The gownsmen will call him *Farrago Parr.*" At length I saw his eye glance upon the notes which relate to himself. His countenance underwent the most rapid changes, indicating surprise, regret, and pity: in a few minutes he threw down the book, and exclaimed, "Poor man! poor man! I am very sorry for him! He is certainly insane, sir! Where were his friends, sir? Was there nobody to sift the folly out of his notes, and prevent its publication? Poor man!"

* Dr. Porteus. This enclosure is not now extant. † Dr. Cleaver.

‡ See vol. I. p. 87.

§ Of the Discourse on the Study of the Law of Nature and Nations.

‖ The Earl of Rosslyn.

"Mrs. Mackintosh joins me in the most kind and respectful remembrance. Believe me ever,

"Dear Hall,
"Your affectionate friend,
"James Mackintosh."

Mr. Mackintosh continued to evince both the steadiness of his friendship for Mr. Hall, and the high value which he set upon this sermon, by frequently quoting it, and applying it to the elucidation of the lectures which he was then delivering in Lincoln's Inn. Several of his auditors were, in consequence, induced sometimes to spend their Sundays at Cambridge, that they might listen to the pulpit instructions of the individual of whom they had heard so much. Many also of the members of the university, including not merely under-graduates, but college-fellows and tutors, were often seen at the Baptist place of worship. These sometimes amounted to fifty or sixty: and a few of them attended so constantly upon the afternoon services that they became almost regarded as regular hearers. Among the latter, some have since become distinguished men, and occupy important stations either in the church or in the public service, as statesmen or senators.

The attendance of so many university students upon the services of a dissenting minister at length began to excite alarm among the "heads of houses;" of whom a meeting was summoned, to consider the expediency of interposing some authoritative measure to prevent this irregularity. But Dr. Mansel, then master of the largest college, Trinity, and afterward Bishop of Bristol, "declared that he could not be a party in such a measure: he admired and revered Mr. Hall, both for his talents and for his genuine liberality; he had ascertained that his preaching was not that of a partisan, but of an enlightened minister of Christ; and that, therefore, if he were not the master of Trinity he should certainly often attend himself; and that even now he had experienced a severe struggle before he could make up his mind to relinquish so great a benefit." Shortly after this he personally thanked Mr. Hall, not only for his sermon, but for his general efforts in the Christian cause; and, through the medium of a common friend, endeavoured to induce him to enter the established church. This, I believe, was the only *direct* attempt to persuade Mr. Hall to conform.

None of these circumstances were permitted to draw Mr. Hall aside from his ordinary course. His studies, his public duties, his pastoral visits, were each assigned their natural place, as before. If there were any change, it was manifest in his increased watchfulness over himself, and, perhaps, in giving a *rather* more critical complexion than before to certain portions of his morning expositions, and in always concluding them with such strong practical appeals as might be suited to a congregation of mixed character.

If I do not greatly mistake, however, his sentiments with regard to controversy in general were considerably modified from this period. The language of the preface to his sermon on the Advantages of Union became the language of his heart and conduct; so that he abstained from public discussions except on questions that seemed of vital importance, either in regard to fundamental truth, or the essential privileges of Christians. Having learned that one of the severest trials of human virtue is the trial of controversy, he resolved, on occasions when silence became inexpedient or censurable, not to repel even injustice and misrepresentation in an angry spirit. Thus when he undertook the refutation of Bishop Horsley's charge, that village

preachers among Methodists and dissenters were teachers of insubordination and sedition, indignant as he doubtless felt at so unjust an insinuation, he opposed it in a manner as remarkable for the conciliatory spirit which it exhibits, as for the singular train of original thought and cogent argument which runs through that interesting fragment.*

In little more than two years after the publication of the sermon on Modern Infidelity, Mr. Hall again appeared before the public as an author. The transient peace of Amiens was celebrated by a general thanksgiving throughout England on the 1st of June, 1802. In the sermon preached by Mr. Hall on that occasion, he endeavoured first to awaken the gratitude of his auditors by a most touching picture of the horrors of war, from which Europe had just escaped; and then to apply the gratitude so excited to acts of benevolence. I have already adverted† to Mr. Hall's reasons for preaching that sermon *memoriter*, without deviation, from his own written copy. I recur to it for a moment, merely to state that though it was delivered with a most impressive dignity, and with less rapidity than that to which he usually yielded himself, yet, in one or two parts, he obviously felt great difficulty in checking his inclination either to modify his language, or to expatiate more at large. This was especially observable at the passage commencing with "Conceive but for a moment the consternation which the approach of an invading army would impress on the peaceful villages in this neighbourhood."‡ He mentioned afterward, that the struggle between his desire to correct what he, just then, saw was "a confusion in the grouping," and his determination "not to deviate from his lesson" was such as rendered it almost impossible for him to proceed. To this kind of perplexity he never again exposed himself.

The nation had scarcely tasted the blessings of peace, when a dispute on one of the articles of the treaty of Amiens involved us in a fresh war with the French. Bonaparte, then first consul, aware of the British ascendency at sea, resolved first to attack our continental dominions. He also seized on the persons and property of the numerous English who had visited France during the brief interval of peace, detaining them as prisoners of war; and then menaced this country with invasion. So strange and, in some respects, so atrocious a commencement of hostilities had a singular effect in melting down dissension, and diffusing a spirit of almost unexampled unanimity, among all ranks and classes of the community. To adopt Mr. Hall's emphatic language: "It was a struggle for existence, not for empire. It must surely be regarded as a happy circumstance that the contest did not take this shape at an earlier period, while many were deceived by certain specious pretences of liberty into a favourable opinion of our enemy's designs. The popular delusion had passed; the most unexampled prodigies of guilt had dispelled it; and, after a series of rapine and cruelty, *had torn from every heart the last fibres of mistaken partiality*."§ At this momentous period Mr. Hall's love of his country was again signally evinced. On the fast day, 19th October, 1803, he preached at Bristol, where he was then on a visit, a sermon afterward published,—"The Sentiments proper to the Present Crisis," which had the happiest effect in enkindling the flame of generous, active patriotism.

This sermon, perhaps, excited more general admiration than any of the author's former productions; on account of its masterly exposure of prevailing errors, its original and philosophical defence of some momentous truths, and its remarkable appropriateness to the exigences

* That on Village Preaching commenced in 1801. See vol. ii. p. 173-206.
† Vol. i. p. 21. ‡ Vol. i. p. 61. § See vol. i. p. 107.

of the crisis. The last ten pages were thought by many (and by Mr. Pitt among the number) to be fully equal in genuine eloquence to any passage of the same length that can be selected from either ancient or modern orators. They were reprinted in various periodical publications, and widely circulated in every direction; and they evidently suggested some of the finest thoughts in Sir James Mackintosh's splendid defence of Peltier, the editor of *L'Ambigu*, who was tried *in London* for a libel on Bonaparte.

In an old manuscript of Mr. Hall's, containing outline notes of sermons preached by him in 1801, 1802, and 1803, scarcely any of them occupying more than two pages, there are inserted the first rude sketch of this valuable sermon, and, at the distance of several pages, a few hints of thoughts and sentences designed to be introduced near the close.

"I. Particulars in which our notions are wrong, or 'we speak not aright,' with regard to national judgments.

"1. Political speculations on the secondary causes of our calamities, exclusive of a regard to the hand of God.

"2. Wanton and indiscriminate censure of the conduct of our rulers.

"We are permitted within . . . . . limits to animadvert on the measures of government.

"3. A confidence in an arm of flesh.

"Cursed is man, &c.

"4. A reliance on our supposed superior virtue.

"5. General lamentations on the corruptions of the age.

"Right sentiments. An acknowledgment of the justice and dominion of God.

"Sincere confession of our sins. Dan. ix. 8. Zech. x. 11," &c.

Such was the original synopsis. The hints intended to be worked in towards the close of the sermon are as below.

"Eternal God! (O thou,) who hast at once declared thyself the God of Peace and the Lord of Hosts, go forth with our armies, and shelter (shield) their heads in the day of battle: give them (endow them with) that undaunted courage, that . . . . . from trouble which springs from a sense of thy presence.

"Under thy conduct, and fighting under thy banners, we will employ all the resources which lie within our reach . . . . . without trusting in an arm of flesh . . . . . while we behold with the eye of faith, what thy prophet discerned in ancient times, the plains filled with horses of fire and chariots of fire.

"There is surely not one person here who will tempt himself to . . . . . by the fear of death, when he reflects that, in the failure of this great enterprise, should the crisis arrive, he must feel a thousand deaths in the extinction of religion, in the spoliation of property, in the violation of chastity, in the confusion of all orders . . . . when all that is noble or holy will be trampled upon . . . . . when death would be sought with the avidity of . . . . . when the enemies' triumphs will be felt in . . . . . mourn . . . . . freedom entombed."

I have here presented the incipient germs of thought and expression, in this extraordinary production, from a persuasion that the man of research into the operations of intellect will be deeply interested on comparing them with their finished result, as exhibited in the first volume.

On looking back upon the preceding pages, I perceive that I shall have laid myself open to the charge of dwelling too long upon that portion of Mr. Hall's life during which I also resided at Cambridge. Let me simply observe, then, that it was the portion in which his fine character assumed, by the means I have been tracing, its true place in public estimation; and that I may be forgiven if I have thus dwelt upon that bright period of my own existence in which I was open to the constant influence of association with one so pre-eminent in mental and moral excellence. Yet I am not disposed to allow the interesting

memory of a long friendship to interfere with biographical fidelity. I have spoken of Mr. Hall's richer qualities agreeably to the estimate I then formed, but with a conviction that they had not at that period reached their full maturity and vigour. I shall now advert to a few of his defects, but with an equally strong persuasion that they diminished as his age, and judgment, and piety advanced.

I have already remarked that Mr. Hall was impetuous in argument. I must here add that he sometimes contended more for victory than for truth. I never knew him voluntarily take what he believed to be the wrong side of an argument, for the sake of showing how adroitly he could carry on the advocacy of any opinions which he, for the moment, took the fancy to maintain; but, if ever he precipitated himself into the assertion of erroneous sentiment, he would strenuously defend his opinion; and, on such occasions, would seem more pleased with perplexing and confounding his opponents, than with faithfully endeavouring to set either them or himself right. This habit was very much restrained, if not altogether overcome, in the latter part of his life. Be it observed, however, that at no time did it tempt him to trifle with the sanctities of religion.

Besides this yielding to the temptation of making the matter of truth and error a prize for contest, there was another thing which, in social life, depreciated the *practical* value of his great ability, namely, a random carelessness in throwing out opinions and estimates of subjects, books, or men. Many of those opinions were graphically correct, and highly valuable, and they were usually clothed in an aphorismatic terseness of language; yet were too often such that plain, credulous listeners for instruction, regarding him as an oracle, would leave him with incorrect and fallacious notions of the topics on which he had spoken, and would, therefore, be strangely perplexed two or three weeks afterward, on hearing, or hearing reported, contrary opinions on the same subjects stated by him subsequently, when further investigation had corrected his judgment. Sometimes, too, especially when indulging in panegyric, he would, even in conversation, give himself up to the feelings of the orator, and allow his fancy to escape into the *ideal*, sketching the picture then existing in his own thoughts, rather than that of the individual whom he imagined himself describing.

It was also much to be regretted, that when in company he did not keep habitually in view the good which his great talents and high character qualified him to impart. His conversation, though always conveying information on the various subjects generally brought forward in cultivated society, did not indicate the prevailing purpose of leading the minds of others in a right direction. Or, if he entered society with this determination, he frequently permitted the circumstances into which he was thrown to divert him from his purpose, thus giving away his admirable conversational powers to the mere casual train of topics, many of them trivial in interest. There could not but be various acute remarks, and every now and then a piece of valuable disquisition, or a most important sentiment, or an eloquent flow of striking observations; yet there was not a systematic bearing towards positive utility. Often, indeed, has Mr. Hall lamented this defect: often, as we have been returning from a party which he had kept alive by the brilliancy and variety of his observations, has he said, "Ah! sir, I have again contributed to the loss of an evening, as to every thing truly valuable: go home with me, that we may spend at least one hour in a manner which becomes us."

It should be added, however, that it was only in larger parties that this occurred. I never spent an evening with him alone, or with the addition of one or two select companions, in which the sublimer pur-

poses of religious as well as intellectual intercourse were not prevailingly kept in view.

In adverting to the deficiencies in Mr. Hall's character, I must further remark, that he did not always seem adequately alive to *special* modes and efforts of utility. There were times when his apparent indifference must have been thought scarcely compatible with his uniform benevolence and piety, unless by those who were thoroughly aware that his infirmities often compelled him to avoid active exertions, except those which fell within the range of ministerial duty; yet, at other seasons, he exerted himself so powerfully and successfully in favour of some grand object, as, in great measure, to compensate for his habitually avoiding the ordinary detail of minor operations.

His defects, on whatever occasions they showed themselves, were as remote as possible from littleness, and were such as would be most naturally found in a noble character. We may hence learn, however, that a man, though far enriched above his fellows with intellectual and spiritual endowments, still manifests the frailties of a fallen being; and that it always behooves us, therefore, with Christian discrimination, to distinguish between grace and nature, to give to God his own glory, and to refer to men their own infirmities.

But I must return from this digression. During the early months of the year 1803, the pain in Mr. Hall's back increased both in intenseness and continuity, depriving him almost always of refreshing sleep, and depressing his spirits to an unusual degree. On one of his visits to Kettering and its neighbourhood, he consulted Dr. Kerr, of Northampton, who recommended him to reside a few miles from Cambridge, and to have recourse to horse exercise. In consequence of this advice, he took a house at Shelford, a village about five miles from Cambridge; and the frequent and short journeys on horseback which thus became necessary for a season seemed beneficial. Yet the advantage was not of long continuance. He missed his delightful evenings spent in the society of the intelligent classes of the congregation (of whom there was a much higher proportion than in most congregations), and he missed still more the simple, heart-refreshing remarks of the poor of his flock, whose pious converse had always been peculiarly soothing to his mind. It is true, he there enjoyed intercourse with two excellent men, both of whom he cordially esteemed—Mr. James Nutter, a valuable member of his church at Cambridge, and the Rev. Thomas Thomason, afterward one of the East India Company's chaplains at Calcutta. With these friends he sometimes spent his evenings; and in company with the latter, who was Mr. Simeon's curate at Trinity Church, he frequently rode to Cambridge on the Sunday mornings; these brothers in the gospel ministry, proceeding thus pleasantly, "in the unity of the Spirit," to their respective spheres of labour in the church of God. Gratifying, however, as this intercourse was, both to Mr. Hall and his valued neighbours, it still left him too much alone, and too much exposed to all the morbid influences of a disordered body, and of a mind overstrained. Often has he been known to sit close at his reading, or yet more intensely engaged in abstract thought, for more than twelve hours in the day; so that, when one or both of his kind friends have called upon him, in the hope of drawing him from his solitude, they have found him in such a state of nervous excitement as led them to unite their efforts in persuading him to take some mild narcotic, and retire to rest. The painful result may be anticipated. This noble mind lost its equilibrium; and he who had so long been the theme of universal admiration now became the subject of as extensive a sympathy. This event occurred

in November, 1804. Mr. Hall was placed under the care of Dr. Arnold of Leicester, whose attention, with the blessing of God, in about two months restored him both to mental and bodily health.

During this afflictive suspension of his pastoral duties his church and congregation gave the most unequivocal proofs that they had caught somewhat of his generous and exalted spirit, and that they were desirous to conduce to his welfare in temporal things, in acknowledgment of the spiritual blessings he had been the means of conveying to them. They set on foot a subscription, to which themselves contributed most liberally, and which, by the aid of other friends, became sufficient to produce, besides a life annuity of one hundred pounds, a further sum nearly equal vested in government securities, the latter to be at his own disposal at death: each sum being properly vested in trustees.*

In April, 1805, he resumed his ministerial functions at Cambridge: but, it being deemed inexpedient for him to reoccupy his house at Shelford, he engaged another at Foulmire, about nine miles from Cambridge. This spot, doubtless, was unwisely selected; as his opportunities of social intercourse with old and intimate friends were almost entirely cut off, and he was thus left to feed more upon his own thoughts than in any preceding part of his life. The evil did not show itself in his public ministrations, which were regarded as more devout, intellectual, and impressive than they had ever been; nor in any diminution of relish for works in which genius stood forth in defence of religious truth; as his exquisite critique upon Foster's Essays, written at this period, amply evinces.† But the evils resulting from solitude and a return of his old pain with more than its usual severity, ere long began to show themselves. Sleepless nights, habitual exclusion from society, a complete self-absorption, and the incessant struggle between what was due to a church and congregation which had given such signal proofs of affection for him, and what he felt to be necessary for his own preservation, a speedy removal from air and scenery that more and more impaired his health and oppressed his spirits: these, at about twelve months after his former attack at Shelford, produced a recurrence of the same malady, which again laid him aside from public duty.

He soon, however, recovered the complete balance of his mental powers, under the judicious care of the late Dr. Cox, of Fish Ponds, near Bristol. It was regarded as essential to the permanent possession of mental health and vigour, that he should resign the pastoral office at Cambridge, that he should, for a year, at least, seek retirement in a spot selected and cordially approved by himself, abstain from preaching, and, as far as possible, avoid all strong excitement.

Pursuant to this advice, he sent in his letter of resignation, which with that from the church in reply, is inserted in the present volume.‡ Thus terminated a connexion which had subsisted for fifteen years, and had been of great benefit to Mr. Hall's character; while, by the Divine blessing upon his labours, it had transformed a society that was rapidly sinking under the influence of cold or disputatious speculators, into a flourishing church and congregation, "bringing forth the fruits of righteousness," and shining in the lustre of a consistent Christian profession. It is pleasing to remark that the attachment on both sides remained undiminished until Mr. Hall's death.

On recovering from this attack, he received a letter from his old friend Sir James Mackintosh, then Recorder of Bombay, which was written soon after Sir James had heard of his first indisposition. It is highly

* See, also, the note to p. 227. † See vol. ii. p. 233-248. ‡ See p. 226-228.

interesting, both as a memorial of genuine friendship, and as a beautiful exhibition of elevated and delicate sentiment. My insertion of it will not, however, be regarded as a proof that I entirely adopt the *theory* which the writer so elegantly sketched.

"My dear Hall, "*Bombay, Sept.* 21, 1805.

"I believe that in the hurry of leaving England, I did not answer the letter which you wrote to me in December, 1803. I did not, however, forget your interesting young friend, from whom I have had one letter from Constantinople, and to whom I have twice written at Cairo, where he now is. No request of *yours* could, indeed, be lightly esteemed by me.

"It happened to me a few days ago, in drawing up (merely for my own use) a short sketch of my life, that I had occasion to give a faithful statement of my recollection of the circumstances of my first acquaintance with you. On the most impartial survey of my early life, I could see nothing which tended so much to excite and invigorate my understanding, and to direct it towards high, though, perhaps, scarcely accessible objects, as my intimacy with you. Five-and-twenty years are now past since we first met; yet hardly any thing has occurred since which has left a deeper or more agreeable impression on my mind. I now remember the extraordinary union of brilliant fancy with acute intellect, which would have excited more admiration than it has done, if it had been dedicated to the amusement of the great and the learned, instead of being consecrated to the far more noble office of consoling, instructing, and reforming the poor and the forgotten.

"It was then too early for me to discover that extreme purity, which in a mind preoccupied with the low realities of life, would have been no natural companion of so much activity and ardour, but which thoroughly detached you from the world, and made you the inhabitant of regions where alone it is possible to be always active without impurity, and where the ardour of your sensibility had unbounded scope amid the inexhaustible combinations of beauty and excellence.

"It is not given to us to preserve an exact medium. Nothing is so difficult as to decide how much ideal models ought to be combined with experience; how much of the future should be let into the present, in the progress of the human mind. To ennoble and purify, without raising us above the sphere of our usefulness,—to qualify us for what we ought to seek, without unfitting us for that to which we must submit,—are great and difficult problems, which can be but imperfectly solved.

"It is certain the child may be too manly, not only for his present enjoyments, but for his future prospects. Perhaps, my good friend, you have fallen into this error of superior natures. From this error has, I think, arisen that calamity with which it has pleased Providence to visit you, which to a mind less fortified by reason and religion I should not dare to mention, but which I really consider in you as little more than the indignant struggles of a pure mind with the low realities which surround it,—the fervent aspirations after regions more congenial to it,—and a momentary blindness, produced by the fixed contemplation of objects too bright for human vision. I may say, in this case, in a far grander sense than that in which the words were originally spoken by our great poet,

'——————————And yet
The light which led astray was light from heaven.'

'On your return to us, you must surely have found consolation in the only terrestrial produce which is pure and truly exquisite; in the affections and attachments you have inspired, which you were most worthy to inspire, and which no human pollution can rob of their heavenly nature. If I were to prosecute the reflections and indulge the feelings which at this moment fill my mind, I should soon venture to doubt whether, for a calamity derived from such a source, and attended with such consolations, I should so far yield to the views and opinions of men as to seek to condole with you. But I check myself, and I exhort you, my most worthy friend, to check your best propensities, for the sake of attaining their object. You cannot live *for* men without living *with* them. Serve God then by the active service of men. Contemplate more the good you *can* do than the evil you can only lament. Allow yourself to see the loveliness of virtue amid all its imperfections; and employ

your moral imagination, not so much by bringing it into contrast with the mode of ideal perfection, as in gently blending some of the fainter colours of the latter with the brighter hues of real experienced excellence; thus heightening their beauty, instead of broadening the shade which must surround us till we awaken from this dream in other spheres of existence.

"My habits of life have not been favourable to this train of meditation. I have been too busy or too trifling. My nature perhaps would have been better consulted if I had been placed in a *quieter* station, where speculation might have been my business, and visions of the fair and good my chief recreation. When I approach you, I feel a powerful attraction towards this which seems the natural destiny of my mind; but habit opposes obstacles, and duty calls me off, and reason frowns on him who wastes that reflection on a destiny independent of him which he ought to reserve for actions of which he is the master.

"In another letter I may write to you on miscellaneous subjects; at present I cannot bring my mind to speak of them. Let me hear from you soon and often.

"Farewell, my dear friend,

"Yours ever most faithfully,

"JAMES MACKINTOSH."

Two visitations of so humiliating a calamity within the compass of a year deeply affected Mr. Hall's mind. Happily, however, for himself and for the world, his spirits soon recovered their wonted tone; and the permanent impression on his character was exclusively religious. His own decided persuasion was, that however vivid his convictions of religious truth, and of the necessity of a consistent course of evangelical obedience had formerly been, and however correct his doctrinal sentiments during the last four or five years, yet that he did not undergo a thorough transformation of character, a complete renewal of his heart and affections, until the first of these seizures. Some of his Cambridge friends, who visited him at Shelford previously to his removal to Dr. Arnold's, and witnessed his deep prostration of soul while he read the fifty-first Psalm, and made each verse the subject of penitent confession and of a distinct prayer, were rather inclined to concur with him as to the correctness of the opinion. Be this, however, as it may (and the wonderful revelations of "the great day" can alone remove the doubt), there can be no question that from this period he seemed more to live under the prevailing recollection of his entire dependence upon God, that his habits were more devotional than they had ever before been, his exercises more fervent and more elevated.

In a letter written to his friend Mr. Phillips, of Clapham, after his recovery, he thus adverts to his afflictions:

"I cannot look back upon the events which have befallen me without admiration and gratitude. I am a monument of the goodness and of the severity of God. My sufferings have been extreme, and the kindness of God, in interposing in my behalf, unspeakable. Pray for me, my dear friend, that I may retain an indelible sense of the mercies received, and that the inconceivable afflictions I have undergone may 'work for me the peaceable fruits of righteousness.' I am often afraid lest it should be with me as with the ancient Israelites, who, after they had sung the praises of God, 'soon forgot his works.' O! that a life so signally redeemed from destruction may be as signally employed in that which is alone the true end of life, the service of God. But my heart is 'like a deceitful bow,' continually prone to turn aside; so that nothing but the powerful impulse of Divine grace can fix it in a right aim."

At this time, I believe, Mr. Hall, under the persuasion to which I have just alluded, made a solemn dedication of himself to God, renewing the act annually on the recurrence of his birthday. One of these touching and impressive records, which has been found among his papers, will, I feel assured, be read with deep interest.

"AN ACT OF SOLEMN DEDICATION OF MYSELF TO GOD.

"O LORD, thou that searchest the heart and triest the reins of the children of men, be thou the witness of what I am now about, in the strength of thy grace, to attempt: that grace I humbly and earnestly implore, to give validity and effect to that act of solemn engagement of myself to thy service on which I am about to enter. 'Thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins are none of them hid from thee.' 'I was born in sin, and in iniquity did my mother conceive me.' I am an apostate, guilty branch of an apostate guilty root, and my life has been a series of rebellions and transgressions, in which I have walked 'according to the course of this world; according to the Prince of the power of the air, the *spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience*.' How shall I confess my transgressions before thee; what numbers can reach; what words can adequately express them! '*My iniquities have increased over my head, and my transgressions have grown up unto Heaven.*' O Lord, I esteem it a wonderful mercy that I have not long since been cut off in the midst of my sins, and been sent to hell before I had an opportunity or a heart to repent. Being assured from the Word of God of thy gracious and merciful nature, and of thy willingness to pardon and accept penitent believing sinners on the ground of the blood and righteousness of thine own adorable Son, 'who died, the just for the unjust, to bring them to God,' and that 'him that cometh to him he will in nowise cast out,' I do most humbly prostrate myself at the footstool of his cross, and through him enter into thy covenant. I disclaim all right to myself from henceforth, to my soul, my body, my time, my health, my reputation, my talents, or any thing that belongs to me. I confess myself to be the property of the glorious Redeemer, as one whom I humbly hope he has redeemed by his blood to be part of 'the first-fruits of his creatures.'

"I do most cheerfully and cordially receive him in all his offices, as my Priest, my Prophet, and my King. I dedicate myself to him, to serve, love, and trust in him as my life and my salvation to my life's end.

"I renounce the devil and all his works, the flesh, and the world, with heartfelt regret that I should have been enslaved by them so long. I do solemnly and deliberately take thee to be my full and satisfying good, and eternal portion in and through thine adorable Son the Redeemer, and by the assistance of the blessed Spirit of all grace, the third Person in the triune God, whom I take to be my Sanctifier and Comforter to the end of time, and through a happy eternity, praying that the Holy Spirit may deign to take perpetual possession of my heart and fix his abode there.

"I do most solemnly devote and give up myself to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, agreeably to the terms of the gospel covenant, and in humble expectation of the blessings it ascertains to sincere believers. I call thee to witness, O God! the truth and reality of this surrender of all I have, and all I am, to thee; and, conscious of the unspeakable deceitfulness of my heart, I humbly and earnestly implore the influence of thy Spirit to enable me to stand steadfast in this covenant, as well as an interest in the blood of the Son, that I may be forgiven in those instances (alas! that such an idea should be possible) in which I may, in any degree, swerve from it.

"Done this [2d] day of May, 1809, seven o'clock in the evening, Leicester. "ROBERT HALL."

Mr. Hall, on his removal from Dr. Cox's, spent some months among his relatives and friends in Leicestershire. At Arnsby he retraced the scenes of his youth, often visited the grave-yard, which would naturally awaken many interesting recollections of his early life, and on these occasions he has more than once been seen kneeling at his father's grave, engaged in earnest prayer. He afterward resided, for a time, at Enderby, a pleasant and sequestered village, five miles from Leicester, where, by the united influence of calm retirement and gentle spontaneous occupation, he gradually regained his bodily health, with great mental tranquillity, and a renewed capacity for usefulness in the church.

His friends Dr. Ryland and Mr. Fuller, persuaded of the benefits that would flow from drawing his attention to a specific object, requested him to investigate the critical peculiarities of some difficult texts in the New Testament, respecting which Dr. Marshman had asked the opinion of his friends in England. This judicious application directed his thoughts to some of his old and favourite inquiries, and produced the most salutary effects.* From this he passed to other literary occupations, thence to closer biblical study, and, in due time, when his strength and self-possession were adequately restored to permit the exertion without injury, he returned to the delightful work of "proclaiming the good tidings of peace."

He first preached in some of the villages around him; and then, occasionally, to a small congregation assembling at a chapel in Harvey-lane, Leicester, which had several years before been under the care of that eminent man Dr. Carey, now of Serampore. The congregation had been diminishing for some years, and at this time did not exceed two hundred and fifty: the church consisted of seventy-six members. After having preached to them a few months, he accepted an invitation to become their stated pastor; and his ministerial labours were soon followed by tokens of good. "The people," said he, in a letter to Dr. Ryland, "are a simple-hearted, affectionate, praying people, to whom I preach with more pleasure than to the more refined audience at Cambridge. We have had, through mercy, some small addition, and hope for more. Our meetings in general, our prayer-meetings in particular, are well attended."

With this church he continued connected nearly twenty years. The church and congregation steadily increased during that long interval, and scarcely any thing of moment occurred to interrupt their internal peace. The place of worship, which when Mr. Hall first settled there would not conveniently hold four hundred persons, was enlarged in 1809 for the reception of about eight hundred; and in 1817 a second enlargement rendered it capable of accommodating a thousand persons. In 1826, at the close of Mr. Hall's labours there, the place was comfortably filled, and the members of the church, besides those who it is believed had gone to their eternal reward, amounted to nearly three hundred. More than a hundred of those who constituted the evening congregation were pious members of the Church of England.

In the autumn of 1807 Mr. Hall removed from Enderby to a house in Leicester, which he engaged partly that he might more conveniently associate with the people of his charge, and partly in anticipation of his marriage, which took place in March, 1808. This event gave great

* For more than two years he employed much time in a critical examination of the New Testament, and in arranging such corrected translations as he deemed important, with short reasons for his deviating from the authorized version; intending to publish the whole in a pamphlet of about one hundred pages. Just as he had finished this work, he for the first time saw Macknight's new translation of the Apostolic Epistles; and finding himself anticipated in many of the corrections which he thought most valuable, destroyed his manuscript

and sincere satisfaction to his old and intimate friends, most of whom had long regretted that one so evidently formed for domestic enjoyments should for so many years have lived without attaining them, and had no doubt, indeed, that an earlier marriage would, by checking his propensity to incessant retirement and mental abstraction, have preserved him from the heavy afflictions which had befallen him. As Mrs. Hall still lives to mourn the loss of her incomparable husband, I must not permit myself more than to testify how highly he estimated her kindness and affection, and how often, in his conversation, as well as in his letters, he expressed his gratitude to God for giving him so pious, prudent, and devoted a wife. Of their five children, three daughters and one son survive. Another son died in 1814.*

Mr. Hall's residence at Leicester was not only of longer continuance than at any other place, but I doubt not that it was the period in which he was most happy, active, and useful. His domestic comfort at once contributed to a more uniform flow of spirits than he had for some time experienced, and greatly to the regularity of his habits. The increase both of attentive hearers and of the number among them who were admitted to church-fellowship, supplied constant reason for encouragement and thankfulness. He was also within the reach of ministers and others, of different persuasions, men of decided piety, and some of them of considerable attainments, who knew how to appreciate the extraordinary advantages of frequent intercourse with such an individual; thus yielding him the delight of an interchange of soul and sentiment, besides that fruit of friendship so aptly characterized by Lord Bacon:—"Whosoever hath his mind fraught with many thoughts, his wits and understanding do clarify and break up in the communicating and discoursing with another—he tosseth his thoughts more easily—he marshalleth them more orderly—he seeth how they look when they are turned into words—and he waxeth wiser than himself, often more by an hour's discourse than by a day's meditation."†

Leicester, from its situation in the heart of the midland counties, as well as from its importance in a leading inland manufacture, was the centre of influence and operation to a considerable distance around; and the concurrence of many favourable circumstances had rendered it the centre also of a religious influence, and of religious operations, diffusing themselves incessantly with a new and growing impulse. To this the zeal and activity of the late Rev. Thomas Robinson of Leicester, and of Mr. Hall's father, had greatly contributed; and many clergymen and dissenting ministers in Leicestershire and the neighbouring counties, were, in their respective fields of labour, instrumental in producing the most cheering and successful results. The attention of the Christian world had been recently invited, or, I might perhaps say, *summoned*, to promote the noble objects of missionary societies, Bible societies, Sunday and other schools for the instruction of the poor; and the summons had been obeyed in a universality and cordiality of vigorous Christian effort, and in a spirit of conciliation and harmony, such as the world had not yet known. Placed in the midst of so extensive

* See p. 248.

† Mr. Hall, however, from the midway position of Leicester, between London and the large towns in Lancashire and Yorkshire, was much exposed to interruptions. (See p. 262.) Many persons who had but a slight acquaintance with him would invariably spend a day at Leicester in their way from London to Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, &c., or from either of those places to London, that they might, during the greater part of it, enjoy his society; and, though he often felt this to be a real annoyance, yet such was his feeling of what was due to strangers in point of courtesy, that it was not until he had sustained the inconvenience for almost twenty years that he would consent that this class of visiters should be informed he would not be at leisure to see them until evening

a sphere of benevolent and sacred influence, Mr. Hall was soon roused to a measure of activity and a diversity of employment to which he had hitherto been a stranger. The Bible Society at Leicester, missionary societies there and all around, asked and received his aid; and these, with the different public services of frequent occurrence among orthodox dissenters, gave occasion to the happiest exercise of his varied powers.

His religious character thus became correctly estimated by a much larger portion of the community. Instead of being known chiefly to men of reading and taste, as an author who had appeared before the world on a few momentous occasions, and, after a striking exhibition of intellectual and moral energy, had hastened back to his retirement, he now became much more known and revered as the correct and eloquent interpreter of the Christian faith, the intrepid assertor of its infinite superiority to all human systems of philosophy or morals. Long had he been admired by the intelligent as a great man; the circumstances in which he now moved with so much philanthropic ardour caused him to be regarded, not merely by these, but by pious men of every persuasion, as a good man, rejoicing to consecrate his best faculties to the specific objects of the Christian ministry, and such purposes of enlarged exertion as were fully compatible with his holy calling.

Nor were these efforts, and this high estimate of their value, confined to the field of activity he thus occupied. He had, on quitting Bristol in 1791, consented to spend a few weeks with his friends there every two years. He had also made a similar arrangement for visiting Cambridge, where the members of his former congregation had peculiar claims upon him. Although his invariable dread of notoriety, and his dislike of the bustle of the metropolis, caused his visits there to be "few and far between," yet they occurred sufficiently often to excite almost universally the highest admiration of his singular qualities as a preacher, and to convince many who previously had contemplated the evangelical system of religion with great disrelish that it was the *only* foundation of elevated morality, and that its cordial adoption was not necessarily repugnant to genius, learning, and intellectual cultivation.

Wherever he went, he was called to address overflowing congregations, and commonly of a remarkably mixed character. Churchmen and dissenters; men of rank and influence, individuals in lower stations; men of simple piety, and others of deep theological knowledge; men who admired Christianity as a beautiful system, and those who received it into the heart by faith; men in doubt, others involved in unbelief: all resorted to the place where he was announced as the preacher. Frequently he was apprized of this peculiarity in the structure of the auditory, and whenever that was the case, the striking appropriation of the sermon to the assembly was always manifest. Of this the reader will have ample evidence in the sermons inserted in this volume, many of which were delivered on public occasions.*

* That the reader may not suspect I overrate the impression made by Mr. Hall upon those who were not his intimates, nor had fully adopted his scheme of theology, I insert in Appendix, Note C, the late Mr. John Scott's elegant and discriminating sketch of his powers as a preacher and writer.

While this sheet was going through the press, I accidentally found among some old letters one from a friend residing in France, in which there was the following allusion to Mr. Hall by a French Protestant clergyman, who was visiting Bristol in Sept. 1822. In a letter addressed to another Protestant minister, Mr. Kerpezdron, of Aulnay, he says,

"I heard Mr. Robert Hall of Leicester, last Tuesday morning; but his sermon was so great, so good, so eloquent, so simple, so pious, in a word, so complete a piece of pulpit oratory, that I cannot tell you any thing about it, except that it has made an indelible impression on my mind. I thought when I came out that I never could preach again"

Mr. Hall's writings during his residence at Leicester, though by no means numerous, tended greatly to augment his influence upon society.

The first of these was published anonymously in the Eclectic Review, but left no room for hesitation as to its author. It was a critique upon a pamphlet entitled "Zeal without Innovation," which he undertook at the earnest entreaty of the late Mr. Robinson of Leicester, "who, in common with all the serious clergy in those parts, disapproved the pamphlet highly."* As it is no part of my intention to present elaborate accounts of Mr. Hall's successive publications, it may suffice for me to remark with regard to this critique, that while it places the controversy between the puritans and their opponents in a flood of light, and exhibits the essential importance of religious liberty to the growth, if not in some cases to the existence, of genuine, devotional Christianity; it presents a more admirable picture of the character of the evangelical clergy,† a more powerful, liberal, and successful defence of their object and conduct, than has been, as yet, accomplished by any other person. Many regard it as among the most instructive and useful, as well as among the most masterly, of Mr. Hall's productions. It abounds in keen satire, in irrefragable argument, in touching description, in tasteful imagery, in exquisite diction, and in sentiments of a weight and worth only to be fully estimated by men whose minds are elevated above the prejudices which tie us down to sects and parties, and can rejoice at the extension of true religion among persons of any persuasion, or through the instrumentality of whomsoever the great Head of the church may employ.‡ The value set by the public upon this disquisition was evinced in the rapid sale of three editions, in a separate pamphlet, independently of its circulation in the Review.

Of the sermons published by Mr. Hall during his residence at Leicester, the first was preached in behalf of the Sunday-school connected with his own congregation, and appeared under the title of "The Advantages of Knowledge to the Lower Classes." The subject is not precisely adapted to the decorations of eloquence; for the deplorable effects of ignorance and the blessings of knowledge are best exhibited in the detail of facts, which admit of no embellishment. Mr. Hall's desire to enlarge the capacity for enjoyment among the lower classes, as well as to promote their highest welfare, tempted him, however, to enter this region of commonplaces, and thus gave a fresh opportunity of showing how an original thinker can communicate an air of freshness to a worn-out topic, bring up to the surface arguments and illustrations that lie far below the reach of ordinary reasoners, and enforce them with a warmth and energy calculated equally to impress and to convince.§

The next two sermons are of a much higher order. One of them, on "The Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Minister," was addressed to the Rev. James Robertson, on his ordination over the

* See p. 233.

† I use this term to avoid a periphrasis, and because it is intelligible and strictly characteristic.

‡ See vol. ii. p. 234–289.

§ This sermon, as well as his two able pamphlets on the "Framework Knitters' Fund," and in "Reply to Cobbett and others" (vol. ii. p. 125–154), should be regarded as flowing entirely from his benevolence. This, with him, had never been a fleeting sentiment in occasional operation, but one that was permanently fed by Christian principles. It was, however, greatly extended, to adopt his own language, "by those impressions of tenderness, gratitude, and sympathy which the endearments of domestic life supply," and led him to investigate the actual circumstances of the neighbouring poor, and constantly to aim at the alleviation of their distress. Not long after his marriage, when his own pecuniary resources were much restricted, he proposed to fast on certain days, that he might have it in his power to distribute more among the needy: and he thought it wrong to have more than two coats when so many persons around him were clothed in mere rags.

Independent Church at Stretton, Warwickshire; the other, which portrays the duties, discouragements, and supports "of the Christian Missionary," was addressed to the Rev. Eustace Carey, on his designation as a missionary to India. In these the author traces with a master hand the various sources of discouragement and consolation which appertain to the respective offices of the minister and the missionary. Like one intimately acquainted with comparative anatomy, he exhibits the points of agreement, as well as those of diversity, in the different subjects, with the most convincing discrimination; while conversant as well with the morbid as the healthy anatomy of the subjects before him, he explores to its inmost recess that universal moral disease which calls forth the efforts of both ministers and missionaries, and then (where the analogy must drop) he reveals the principles and the origin of an infallible cure. Both these addresses are remarkable for their originality and variety; every topic successively advanced is irradiated with eloquence, and glows with feeling; and so skilfully are both the discourses conducted, that while they are avowedly directed to the minister and the missionary, and abound in the most valuable instructions to them respectively, the private Christian, who reads with devout attention, may derive from them as rich instruction for himself, and as many directions for his own religious improvement, as though they were specifically addressed to him alone. This, indeed, was a decided characteristic of Mr. Hall's sermons. He who heard, or he who read, would find his astonishment and admiration strongly excited; but often, if not always, the more his emotion was enkindled by the preacher, the more forcibly was he compelled to retire to "the chambers of imagery," and examine his own heart.

The sudden and untimely death of the Princess Charlotte of Wales, was an event calculated to make the deepest impression upon a mind constituted like Mr. Hall's. The illustrious rank of the victim, her youth and recent marriage, the affecting nature of the catastrophe, its probable influence upon the reigning monarch, upon the succession to the throne, and the welfare of the nation even to distant ages; all presented themselves to his thoughts with the most heart-stirring energy. He preached three sermons on the occasion, of which many of the auditors affirm the one published was by no means the best. It, however, by universal acknowledgment, bore the palm above all the numerous valuable sermons that were then published. It embraces the various topics that would occur to a man of piety, feeling, and excursive thought, on the contemplation of such an event,—the mysteriousness of God's providence, the vicissitudes of empires, the aggravated poignancy of sudden calamity to individuals of elevated station, "the uncertainty of life, the frailty of youth, the evanescence of beauty, the nothingness of worldly greatness," the blindness of man to futurity, "the human race itself withering" away, and the perpetuity of God's promises as the great and noble contrast to universal fragility; these are touched in succession with the utmost tenderness, beauty, and sublimity. In felicity of diction, in delicacy and pathos, in the rich variety of most exquisite and instructive trains of thought, in their cogent application to truths of the utmost moment, in the masterly combination of what in eloquence, philosophy, and religion was best calculated to make a permanent and salutary impression, this sermon probably stands unrivalled.

Besides the various sermons and reviews which he wrote and published during his residence at Leicester, he composed for circulation among the associated Baptist churches in the counties of Northamp-

ton, Leicester, and Warwick, two tracts, On the Work of the Holy Spirit, and On Hearing the Word; both deeply imbued with simple evangelical truth, and rich in excellent practical remarks, fitted for the beneficial perusal of all classes. There were also other compositions which he executed with singular felicity. I mean his biographical sketches. They are, except the rapid but exquisite sketches of Brainerd, Fletcher of Madeley, and Henry Martyn, the delineations *of a friend;* and perhaps, in a few particulars, need a slight allowance for the high colouring to which the warmth of friendship tempts us when meditating upon departed excellence; yet they are, on the whole, exact in the resemblance, and finely exemplify the author's varied powers, especially his delicate and accurate discrimination of the degrees and shades of human character.

One of these, the character of the Rev. John Sutcliff, is an unfinished portrait; Mr. Hall, after a few unsatisfactory trials, relinquishing the attempt. The following letter to Mr. Fuller, on the occasion of this failure, will be read with interest, as an example both of his diffidence and of his sense of the obligation of a promise.

"My dear Brother,

"I am truly concerned to tell you that I cannot succeed at all in my attempts to draw the character of our dear and venerable brother Sutcliff. I have made several efforts, and have sketched, as well as I could, the outlines of what I conceive to be his character; but have failed in producing such a portrait as appears to me fit for the public eye. I am perfectly convinced that your intimacy with him, and your powers of discrimination, will enable you to present to posterity a much juster and more impressive idea of him than I can. I am heartily sorry I promised it. But promises I hold sacred; and therefore, if you insist upon it, and are not willing to release me from my engagement, I will accomplish the task as well as I can. But if you will let the matter pass *sub silentio*, without reproaching me, you will oblige me considerably. It appears to me that, if I ever possessed a faculty of character-drawing, I have lost it, probably for want of use; as I am far from taking any delight in a minute criticism on character, to which, in my younger days, I was excessively addicted. Both our tastes and talents change with the progress of years. The purport of these lines, however, is to request you to absolve me from my promise, in which light I shall interpret your silence; holding myself ready, however, to comply with your injunctions.

"I am, my dear sir,

"Your affectionate brother,

"*Sept.* 1814. "R. Hall."

For several years, about this time, Mr. Hall's thoughts were greatly occupied upon the subject of "Terms of Communion." His first publication in reference to it appeared in 1815: but they who were admitted to his intimacy will recollect how often, three or four years before its appearance, he advocated a cautious revision of the practice of nearly all churches; and how successfully he refuted the arguments of those who favoured any narrow system of exclusion. He regarded the existence of a principle which made so many churches points of repulsion instead of centres of union as a very serious evil; and often deplored it in language similar to that which commences his first production on the subject.*

The discussion, indeed, is neither of slight nor of temporary interest. It involves the prevailing practice of every church in Christendom, whether established or independent of an establishment; and it includes an answer to the inquiry how purity of faith and conduct shall be pre

* See vol. I. p. 289.

served without an infringement of the principles requisite to make *every* church a portion of that sublime invisible society, the "Church Universal," constituted of all the members of Christ's mystical body.

Rapidly approaching, as we seem to be, to that state of things when all churches, national as well as others, will feel the expediency, if not the necessity, of reverting to first principles in modifying and improving their several communities, the controversy on "Terms of Communion" forces itself upon the attention as one of primary importance, serving to ascertain and determine almost every question of value in reference to ecclesiastical polity.

I thus, though but for a moment, advert to this controversy, that the general reader may not be induced to undervalue it. It occupies a considerable portion of the first volume of these works, besides the substance of a distinct pamphlet inserted in the second volume. Of the different writers who opposed Mr. Hall on this occasion, Mr. Kinghorn was, unquestionably, the most acute and learned. His volume should be read in connexion with Mr. Hall's, by such as wish to view the question in all its bearings. Mr. Hall's part of the controversy is conducted with his characteristic frankness and decision; and evinces the same clearness, copiousness, strength, and majesty of diction as he uniformly displayed upon every subject to which he bent his mind with all its power. Sometimes when a narrow, illiberal sentiment, calculated to check the spirit of Christian union and affection, excites his indignation, he rebukes with a cutting severity: and I feel no inclination to deny, that, in a few cases, he has suffered himself to indulge in terms of sarcasm, if not of contempt, that add nothing to his argument, and had been better spared Yet, as one of his bitterest opponents has declared, "it was seldom that his thunder was heard, but the bolt was felt; and both were exercised on the side of truth and virtue."

In these, as in others of his controversial pieces, the reader may safely reckon upon much that is eloquent and impressive, apart from what immediately relates to the questions under debate. Among which may be specified the remarks on excommunication, the beautiful delineation of the conduct of our Lord, the passages distinguishing between conditions of salvation and meritorious conditions, and those in which he discriminates between the atonement contemplated as a fact and as a doctrine, and thence infers the "peculiar glory of the gospel in contradistinction from the law of Moses."*

About this time† Mr. Hall had a correspondence with a friend on a kindred subject, that of occasional communion. That individual, though a decided Baptist, and long a member of a dissenting church, was in the habit of occasional communion with an Episcopalian chapel in his neighbourhood, the minister of which held evangelical sentiments. Mr. Hall expressed a desire to be acquainted with his reasons for this practice. In reply, he informed Mr. Hall that he thought those reasons flowed obviously from the principles for which he himself was so earnestly and successfully contending: that one of the highest enjoyments of a man who humbly hoped he constituted a part of the church universal was to testify his feeling of brotherhood with other assemblies of orthodox Christians, than that with which he was immediately

* See vol. i. p. 339, 359, 360, 378–382, 389, 390.

† Nearly at this time, also, viz. in September, 1817, the faculty of Marischal College, Aberdeen, at the instance of their late learned principal, Dr. W. L. Brown, conferred upon Mr. Hall the degree of D.D., in testimony of their high admiration of his talents and character. He felt much gratified by this mark of their good opinion; but, having a conscientious objection to the title of doctor of *divinity*, he never adopted it.

connected, by holding communion with them at convenient seasons: that in this respect, as the political grounds of dissent were of very little value in his esteem, he made no mental distinction between established and separate churches: that, having no conscientious objection to kneeling at the sacrament, and having resolved never to communicate even occasionally but where he had reason to believe the bulk of those who partook of the sacrament were real Christians, he felt no hesitation as to the propriety, while he could speak decidedly as to the comfort, of the course he had pursued. He stated, further, that with Richard Baxter he "disowned the principle of many who think their presence maketh them guilty of all that is faulty in the public worship and ministration: for this dissolveth all worshipping churches on earth, without exception;" that he considered Baxter's Refutation of Dr. Owen's arguments against occasional communion as complete; and that he would rather err in the spirit of Baxter and Howe, on such a question, than be right according to the narrow measures by which too many would enforce a contrary practice. Mr. Hall's reply, which is subjoined, exemplifies his usual manner of guarding against a misapprehension of the real extent of his agreement with another upon any disputed point.

"My dear Friend, "*March* 6, 1818.

"I am much obliged to you for the frankness with which you have answered my inquiries. Perhaps I may not be quite prepared to go with you the full extent of your moderation; though on this I have by no means made up my mind. I admire the spirit with which you are actuated, and esteem you more than ever for the part you have acted. I perfectly agree with you that *the old grounds* of dissent are the true ones, and that our recent apologists have mixed up too much of a political cast in their reasonings upon this subject. Though I should deprecate the founding of *any established* church, in the popular sense of that term, I think it very injudicious to lay that as the corner-stone of dissent. We have much stronger ground in the *specific* corruptions of the Church of England, ground which our pious ancestors occupied, and which may safely defy every attempt of the most powerful and acute minds to subvert. With respect to occasional conformity, I by no means think it involves an abandonment of dissent; and I am inclined to think that, were I in a private station (not a minister, I mean), I should, under certain circumstances, and in certain situations, be disposed to practise it; though nothing would induce me to acknowledge myself a permanent member of the Church of England.

"In regard to episcopacy, it appears to me entirely a human, though certainly a very early, invention. It was unknown, I believe, in the apostolical times; with the exception, probably, of the latter part of John's time. But, as it was practised in the second and third centuries, I should have no conscientious objection to it. As it subsists *at present* among us, I am sorry to say I can scarcely conceive a greater [abuse]. It subverts equally the rights of pastors and of people, and is nothing less than one of the worst relics of the papal hierarchy. Were every thing else what it ought to be in the established church, prelacy, as it now subsists, would make me a decided dissenter.

* * * * * * *

"I remain, my dear sir, with great esteem,

"Yours most affectionately,

"R. Hall."

Mr. Hall's engagements for the press, numerous and heavy as they were to one who wrote with so much difficulty and pain, did not draw him aside from pastoral watchfulness over his church and congregation; nor were they permitted to shorten those hours of retirement in which he sought "converse with God." Nothing, on the contrary, was more evident than his increased spirit of devotion as he advanced in life. About the year 1812, he commenced the practice of setting apart one

day in a month for especial prayer and fasting. On these occasions he retired into his study immediately after the morning domestic worship, and remained there until the evening. Finding this eminently conducive to his own comfort, at the end of about two years he recommended the church to hold quarterly fasts. They at once adopted the recommendation; and some of the members often speak of the first meeting for this purpose as a most extraordinary season of devout and solemn feeling.

About the same time, or somewhat earlier, he announced his opinion of the disadvantage arising from the presence of others besides the communicants on sacramental occasions. In a short address he explained the customs of the early Christians with regard to the Lord's Supper, and showed that the admission of spectators who were not members of the church during the celebration was comparatively a modern innovation. He pointed out the inconclusiveness of the ordinary arguments,—that spectators often receive benefit from the addresses of the ministers, and that therefore their exclusion was cutting them off from good, and that such exclusion was an infringement of religious liberty. He also stated that the presence of such spectators deprived him of much comfort during the communion service, and that he should regard their keeping away as a personal kindness to himself. His address was received with affectionate respect; and from that time, those who had previously remained to witness the administration discontinued the custom.

Some time after the conclusion of his part of the controversy on "Terms of Communion," he made an effort to persuade the church at Harvey-lane to adopt the practice of "mixed communion;" but finding that it would disturb the peace which had so long subsisted in the society, he relinquished his intention, and recommended the formation of a distinct church on the mixed communion principle, its sacramental service being held on the morning of the same Sabbath on which the "strict communion" church held its corresponding service in the afternoon. This plan was adopted and followed during Mr. Hall's continuance at Leicester, without causing any interruption of the harmony which prevailed among the different classes of worshippers.

In the year 1823, the minister of a Unitarian congregation at Leicester, having delivered a series of what are usually denominated "challenge lectures," in defence of his own opinions, to hear which individuals of other persuasions were publicly invited, Mr. Hall felt it to be his duty to offer a timely antidote to the evil. He therefore preached twelve lectures on the points at issue, and had the happiness to know that they were serviceable in checking the diffusion of Socinian error. His concise outline of these lectures, as well as fuller notes of two or three, are inserted in the present volume. He was strongly urged by several members of his congregation, and by various neighbouring ministers, to publish the whole; but uniformly replied, that though he believed they had been beneficial, he was conscious they contained nothing that could be regarded as really new in the controversy; and that Dr. Wardlaw had so admirably occupied the ground in his sermons, already before the public, that any thing which he could offer in print would only be regarded as an impertinent intrusion.

Throughout the whole of Mr. Hall's residence at Leicester, he suffered much from his constitutional complaint; and neither his habit of smoking, nor that of taking laudanum,* seemed effectually to alle-

* In 1812 he took from fifty to one hundred drops every night. Before 1826 the quantity had increased to one thousand drops.

viate his sufferings. It was truly surprising that this constant severe pain, and the means adopted to mitigate it, did not in any measure diminish his mental energy. A little difference was, perhaps, discernible in the vivacity of his conversation; but his preaching had, as yet, lost nothing of its force. In letters to his friends he expressed a hope that "a greater savour of Jesus Christ accompanied his ministry;" and remarked, that "his strain of preaching was much less elegant, but more intended for instruction, for awakening conviction, and carrying home truth with power to the heart." And thus it was found, that, as he advanced in years, though there might be a *little* less of elaboration and polish, there was more of spiritual feeling, more of tender and earnest expostulation, and of that pungency of application to the heart and conscience, which resulted from an enlarged acquaintance with human character, and a deeper knowledge of "the things of God." That the Divine blessing accompanied these labours, and in many cases rendered the impression permanent, the history of the church and congregation abundantly proves.

The death of Dr. Ryland in 1825 led to Mr. Hall's invitation to take the pastoral office over the church at Broadmead, Bristol, an office which had been long and honourably sustained by that excellent individual. After some months spent in anxious deliberation, in advising with his friends, and seeking counsel from above, from the dread he felt lest he "should rush into a sphere of action to which he was not called, and offend God by deserting his proper post," he at length decided to dissolve his long and happy connexion with the church at Leicester. The day of separation, the last sacrament Sabbath, March 26th, 1826, was a day of anguish to him and them, of which I shall not attempt the description. Suffice it to say, that he went through the ordinary public duties of the day with tolerable composure;* but at the sacramental service he strove in vain to conceal his emotion. In one of his addresses to the members of the church, on adverting to the pain of separation, he was so much affected that he sat down, covered his face with his hands, and wept; they, sharing in his distress, gave unequivocal signs of the deepest feeling. Mr. Eustace Carey, who was present, continued the devotional part of the service, until Mr. Hall was sufficiently recovered to proceed. At the close of the solemnity the weeping became again universal, and they parted "sorrowing most of all that they should see his face no more."

Very shortly afterward the church received from Mr. Hall the following letter of resignation.

"TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST MEETING IN HARVEY-LANE, LEICESTER.

"MY DEAR BRETHREN AND SISTERS, "3*d April*, 1826.

"I take this opportunity of solemnly and affectionately resigning the pastoral charge which I have long sustained among you, and of expressing, at the same time, the deep sense I shall ever retain of the marks of affection and esteem with which, both collectively and individually, you have honoured me.

"Though the providence of God has, as I conceive, called me to labour in another part of his vineyard, my solicitude for your spiritual welfare will ever remain unimpaired, nor will any thing give me more joy than to hear of your growth in grace, peace, and prosperity. My prayer will never cease to ascend to the God of all comfort, that he will establish your hearts in love, unite you more and more in the fellowship of saints, and make you fruitful in every good work.

* In order that neither his feelings nor those of the congregation might be too severely tried during the public services, he preached two sermons for the Baptist Mission: that in the morning from Ephes. iii. 8, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;" that in the evening from Matt. vi 10, "Thy kingdom come."

"Let me earnestly entreat you to guard most anxiously against whatever may tend to weaken your union, diminish your affection, or imbitter your spirits against each other. 'Let brotherly love continue;' 'seek peace and pursue it;' and 'may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus Christ, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, stablish, strengthen, settle, and make you perfect.'

"I hope that, in the choice of a successor, you will earnestly and anxiously seek Divine direction; prefer the useful to the splendid; the solid to the glittering and showy; and be supplied with a pastor who will, in doctrine, exhibit 'uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, and sound speech which cannot be condemned,' and be in manner and behaviour a pattern to believers.

"Permit me, on this occasion, to return you my sincere acknowledgments for the uniform kindness with which you have treated me, the respectful attention you have paid to my ministry, and the candour with which you have borne my infirmities.

"With my most earnest prayers for your spiritual and eternal welfare, I remain,

"My dear brethren and sisters,

"Your obliged and affectionate friend and brother,

"ROBERT HALL."

Mr. Hall was in his sixty-second year when he removed to Bristol, the scene of his first continuous labours, and now to become the scene of his closing ministry. Some of the friends of his early life still survived to welcome his return among them; and many others, who had profited by his pulpit exertions on his periodical visits to Bristol, congratulated themselves that he to whom, under God, they owed so much had become their pastor. All things, indeed, except his infirm state of health, seemed to conspire in promoting his own happiness as well as the prosperity of the church with which he had again connected himself.

The church and congregation soon received numerous accessions. In writing to a friend, early in 1829, he says, "I continue to be very happy with my people, from whom I daily receive every demonstration of affection and respect. Our attendance is as good as I could wish; and we have added to the *Baptist* church, during the last year, twenty-seven, and six are standing candidates for baptism. For these tokens of the Divine presence I desire to be thankful."

His heavenly Father, during the concluding years of his life, made a rich provision for his social enjoyments, both in his family and among his friends. Besides the comfort of frequent association with many of his own flock, his pleasures were greatly heightened by intercourse with Mr. Foster, and the tutors of the Baptist Academy, as well as with several clergymen and other ministers and laymen, residing in Bristol and its vicinity. It is true, that wherever he went, or in whatever he engaged, he carried with him the complaint from which he had suffered so much and so long. It had become, as his esteemed friend Mr. Addington termed it, "an internal apparatus of torture;" yet, such was the peculiar structure of his mind, doubtless fortified and prepared for patient endurance by an energy imparted from above, that though his appointment by day and by night was incessant pain, yet high *enjoyment* was, notwithstanding, the law of his existence.

Between his final removal to Bristol and his death, he visited his friends at Cambridge twice, namely, in 1827 and 1829. These visits were undertaken with the sense of responsibility of one who had formerly been their pastor: and he made it a rule so to arrange his time while there as to see, converse with, and exhort every member of the church, and a great proportion of the congregation. He paid also one visit to his recently-quitted flock at Leicester; and two to his friends in London. On these occasions the anxiety to hear him preach

was as great as it had ever been; while his sermons were characterized in a high degree by the qualities that had long distinguished them,—with the addition of a stronger manifestation of religious and benevolent affections, a still more touching persuasiveness of manner, continued with an increasing intensity of feeling, with deeper and deeper solemnity of appeal; the entire effect being greatly augmented by the sudden introduction, just as the last sentence seemed dropping from his lips, of some new topic of application or of caution, most urgently pressed; as though he *could* not cease to invite, to warn, to expostulate, until the "Great Master of assemblies" vouchsafed to him the assurance that he had not been pleading his cause in vain.*

Mr. Hall's increasing infirmities did not extinguish his literary ardour, or abate his love of reading. Except during the first years of his residence at Cambridge, reading, and the thinking it called forth, were his incessant occupation to the very close of life; and both the pursuit and its application to the benefit of others yielded him the highest delight. In his early life, as I have already mentioned, it was common with him to carry on five or six different courses of study simultaneously. But for the last ten or twelve years, he mostly confined himself to one book at a time, and read it to the end. His reading continued to be very extensive and varied (for it was his decided opinion that every species of knowledge might be rendered subservient to religion), but his predilection, next to the Scriptures, was for works of clear, strong, and conclusive reasoning, though conveyed in language far from elevated, and sometimes perhaps obscure. Thus he, for full sixty years, read Jonathan Edwards's writings with undiminished pleasure. And of Chillingworth's "Religion of Protestants" he has often been known to say, "It is just like reading a novel:" which, indeed, was his usual expression of commendation with regard to such works of a dry or abstract nature as discovered subtilty, depth, or vigour of thought. In this class he placed the works of Jeremy Bentham, for whom he entertained the highest estimation, as an original, profound, and accurate thinker; observing often, that in the particular province of his speculations, the science of legislation, he had advanced to the limits of reason; and that if *he* were compelled to legislate for the world upon uninspired principles, "he should take Bentham, and go from state to state with as firm a step as though he walked upon a pavement of adamant."†

If, at any time, he could not settle a point of interest without studying a language of which he was ignorant, that constituted no impediment. Shortly before he quitted Leicester, a friend found him one morning, very early, lying on the carpet, with an Italian dictionary and a volume of Dante before him. Being about to quit the room, he said, "No, sir, don't go. I will tell you what I have been about for some weeks. A short time since I was greatly delighted with a parallel between the Paradise Lost and the Divine Comedy of Dante which I read in the Edinburgh Review. But in matters of taste, as well as others, I always like to judge for myself; and so I have been studying Italian. I have caught the idiom, and am reading Dante with great relish; though I cannot yet say, with Milton,—

* It was seldom that the friends who attempted to take down Mr. Hall's sermons did not unconsciously relinquish writing as he approached the close. The reader, however, who never had the privilege of hearing him preach, will be able to form *some* conception of his impressive terminations from the last five pages of the sermon in the present volume on "the Glory of God in concealing."

† He always recommended those who were likely to be offended with the strangeness of Bentham's style to study his principles through the medium of his elegant French commentator M. Dumont.

"'Now my task is smoothly done,
I can fly or I can run.'"

It may seem somewhat out of place, yet I shall be forgiven if I here insert an extract of a letter just received from Mr. Ryley, one of Mr. Hall's most intelligent Leicester friends, in reference to his course of reading there.

"It was what some men might think desultory; but it was essentially a constant habit of grappling with the strong. *Belles Lettres* he did not altogether neglect, though he held the average of such literature in small estimation. Poetry he seldom read, nor did he seem to me to have even studied it *con amore*. He thought Gray's Elegy the finest thing ever written. Milton was his favourite There was something peculiar in his habits respecting poetry. He spoke slightly of poets, with few exceptions, and those few by no means what might have been expected from his own highly imaginative cast of mind. Yet, when he did get hold of an exquisite poem, he would read it with intense attention, apparently with the deepest interest, and then abuse it. With the exception of Milton, who is, in fact, an antique, he preferred the ancient to the modern poets. Of the poetry of our own day, he spoke with a contempt which an accurate or extensive acquaintance with it would have compelled him to relinquish. He had not, I think, made history a distinct and consecutive study, though he had read many of the original historians. He seemed to feel this of late years, and gave much of his time to the subject."

His enjoyment of the writings of the illustrious men of Greece and Rome remained unimpaired to the last. Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero suggested to him many noble arguments in favour of an internal spring of morality, which he employed with his wonted skill in support of the religion of pure motive and devotedness of spirit. Virgil's Georgics he characterized as the most finished of human compositions; and he continued to prefer Virgil to Homer. He greatly admired the copiousness, grace, and harmony of Cicero's diction; but considered Demosthenes by far the most powerful orator the world had known; and after speaking with fervid applause of the oration περὶ Στεφάνου, added, that he thought it impossible for a man of soul and feeling to read a single page without catching fire. Only a few months before his last illness, in classifying the different natures and respective effects of the eloquence of reason, of passion, and of imagination, he selected his principal illustrations from Demosthenes, and endeavoured to show that where the two former kinds of eloquence existed in due proportion, the third was of very minor consequence. The individual to whom he made these remarks was struck, as he proceeded, with the development which they supplied of the causes of the deep impression made by his own pulpit addresses; and imputed his more sparing use of imagery in later years, rather to the deliberate conviction of his mind, than to any diminution of the imaginative faculty.

But I must restrain myself, and pass to Mr. Hall's every-day habits after his return to Bristol. The course of his life at home, when not interrupted by visiters, was very uniform. He generally rose and took his breakfast about nine o'clock. Breakfast was immediately succeeded by family worship. At this exercise he went regularly through the Scriptures, reading a portion of the Old Testament in the morning, and of the New Testament in the evening. On Sunday morning he almost invariably read the ninety-second Psalm, being short, and appropriate to the day. He also read in his family the translation of the four Gospels by Campbell, whom he particularly admired, and often recommended, as an accurate translator, and a critic of great acuteness, taste, and judgment. He seldom made any remarks on the por-

tion of Scripture, except when strangers were present, who, he knew, would be disappointed at their entire omission. He regarded himself as very incompetent to render this brief kind of exposition instructive. In the prayer that succeeded, he was not in the habit of forming his petitions on the passage of Scripture just read, though the prayer was usually of considerable length, and very minute in its appropriation. He adverted specifically to all the persons belonging to his family, present and absent: never forgot the people of his care; and dwelt on the distinct cases of members of the church that were under any kind of trial or affliction.

After breakfast and worship, he retired into his study, and uniformly spent some time in devotion, afterward generally reading a portion of the Hebrew Bible. For the last two years, he read daily two chapters of Matthew Henry's Commentary. As he proceeded he felt increasing interest and pleasure; admiring the copiousness, variety, and pious ingenuity of the thoughts, the simplicity, strength, and pregnancy of the expressions. He earnestly recommended this commentary to his daughters; and on hearing the eldest reading, for successive mornings, to the second, he expressed the highest delight. The remainder of the morning until dinner, about three o'clock, was spent in reading some work of learning or of severe thought. After dinner he generally retired to his study, and, if not in so much pain as to prevent it, slept for some time.

On Tuesday evenings were held what are termed "the conferences," in the vestry of the Broadmead chapel: they are meetings ordinarily attended by about two hundred persons, at which two of the students belonging to the Bristol Education Society, or one of the students and the president, speak on a passage of Scripture previously selected for the purpose. Mr. Hall always attended on these occasions, and concluded by speaking for about a quarter of an hour, on the subject of the preceding addresses. He also attended the prayer-meetings, in the same place, on Thursday evenings; except once a month, namely, on the Thursday previous to the administration of the Lord's Supper, when he preached.

The other evenings in the week, except Saturday (and that, indeed, not always excepted), he usually spent at the house of one or other of his congregation, with a very few friends, who were invited to meet him. His inability to walk having greatly increased, his friends generally sent a carriage for him about six o'clock, and conveyed him back about ten.

It is difficult to say whether he had greater fondness for retirement or for company. It displeased him if, especially by sudden interruptions, he was obliged to give up his morning hours of study to visiters; and it would commonly have been a disappointment, if he had not the opportunity of spending his evenings in society. If he were, at any time, thrown among persons of distinguished talents and attainments, and their general character pleased him, it was soon shown how truth and knowledge might be educed by the operation of intellect upon intellect, and how rich a field of instruction and delight would thus be open for the general enjoyment of the party. Usually, however, his choice turned simply upon the prerequisite of piety; he sought for no other acquisitions in his associates than the graces of the Spirit; intelligence added to the enjoyment, but was not essential to it. The society of old friends had with him an exquisite charm, which was greatly heightened if their fathers had been known and esteemed by him or his father such intercourse, requiring no effort, gave full scope to his affections,

without disturbing his mental repose. He uniformly retired from these evening parties full of grateful references to the pleasure which he had felt. If any of his family who accompanied him happened to say that the evening had been dull, he would reply, "I don't think so. It was very pleasant. I enjoyed it. I enjoy every thing." Considering the continuity of his sufferings, how touching a commentary is this upon the inspired aphorism, "the good man shall be satisfied from himself!"

Mr. Hall commonly retired to rest a little before eleven o'clock; but after his first sleep, which lasted about two hours, he quitted his bed to obtain an easier position on the floor, or upon three chairs; and would then employ himself in reading the book on which he had been engaged during the day. Sometimes, indeed often, the laudanum, large as the doses had become, did not sufficiently neutralize his pain to remove the necessity for again quitting his bed.* In these cases he would again put on the dress prepared to keep him adequately warm, and resume his reading. On Sunday mornings, as soon as he awoke, it was usual with him to say, "This is the Lord's day. This is the day the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." And he often impressed it on his family that they ought "not to think their own thoughts," or "to find their own pleasure," on that day.

He did not pursue any plan of training or of discipline with his children. He was remarkably affectionate and indulgent; but he did nothing systematically to correct defects, to guide or excite their minds. Now and then he recommended his daughters to read some particular book one, perhaps, that he had himself read with peculiar satisfaction: but beyond this there do not appear to have been any direct, specific endeavours to impart knowledge, or in any uniform manner to inculcate religious principles.

When, however, any of his children were about to quit home for a short time, it was his practice to summon them to his study, exhort them, and pray with them. One of his daughters, on writing to a friend after his death, says, "Well I remember that, when I was a child, on leaving home for a few days, or on going to school, he would call me into the study, give me the tenderest advice, make me to kneel down by him at the same chair, and then, both bathed in tears, would he fervently supplicate the Divine protection for me. This, I believe, he did with regard to all of us on leaving home, while young." Their minds were also often deeply impressed by hearing him, as they passed his study door, commending them, by name, with the utmost fervency, to God, and entreating those blessings for each which, in his judgment, each most needed.†

Periodical private fasts, such as those which he observed at Leicester, he continued to observe at Bristol, making them seasons of extraordinary self-examination, prayer, and renewed dedication to God. He was not in the habit of keeping a regular journal, nor, generally speaking, did he approve of it, from a persuasion that it tempted to an artificial tone of expression which did not accord with the actual state of the heart. But on some solemn occasions he made a short note in one of his memorandum books, containing hints of texts, &c.

* For more than twenty years he had not been able to pass a whole night in bed. When this is borne in mind, it is truly surprising that he wrote and published so much; nay, that he did not sink into dotage before he was fifty years of age.

† His habit of oral, audible, private prayer rested upon the conviction that silent prayer was apt to degenerate into meditation, while, from our compound nature, a man cannot but be affected by the sound of his own voice, when adequately expressing what is really felt.

Thus: "New-year's day, January 1st, 1826. I have begun the year with a sincere resolution, in the strength of Divine grace, to devote myself wholly and entirely to God: but, knowing my extreme weakness and corruption, I dare place no dependence whatever on my own resolutions. I have, on many occasions, found them unstable as water. I can only cast myself on the mercy of my God, and cry, with the Psalmist, 'Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe.' O Thou most holy and merciful Lord God, I beseech Thee to take up thine abode in my heart, and shape me entirely anew. Amen. Amen."

Again, on his birth-day, 1828. "This day I commence my 64th [65th] year. What reason have I to look with shame and humiliation on so long a tract of years spent to so little purpose! Alas! I am ashamed of my barrenness and unprofitableness. Assist me, O Lord, by Thy grace, that I may spend the short residue of my days in a more entire devotion to Thy service. It is my purpose, in the strength of Divine grace, to take a more minute inspection into the state of my heart, and the tenor of my actions, and to make such observations and memorandums as circumstances may suggest. But to Thee, O Lord, do I look for all spiritual strength, to keep Thy way, and do Thy will."

Mr. Hall still evinced a peculiar solicitude for the welfare of the poorer members of his flock, and greatly lamented his incapacity, from the loss of locomotive energy, to seek them out in their own habitations, and associate with them frequently, as he had done with the poor at Cambridge and Leicester. He publicly expressed his concern that some plan was not arranged for his meeting them in small parties at specified times, and assured them of the cordial readiness with which his part of such a plan should be executed. This, I believe, was not accomplished.

The indications of infirm age now rapidly exhibited themselves, but happily were unaccompanied by a decaying mind or a querulous spirit. The language of his conduct and of his heart corresponded with that of the pious ancient, "Lord, give me patience now, and ease hereafter!" If tempests come they will not last long, but soon will be hushed into an eternal calm.

His inability to take exercise, on account of the gradual increase of his complaint, gave rise, about six years before his death, to another disorder, formidable in its nature and fatal in its issue. The indications of a plethoric habit became more and more apparent. "Thus," adopting the language of Mr. Addington, "the system of the blood-vessels had a laborious duty to perform in circulating their fluid, which, for want of the full aid of muscular exertion, could not be equally distributed. The smaller ones on the surface of the body, and in the extremities, never appeared to derive a sufficient quantity of blood to furnish the usual proportion of animal heat, while the large trunks in the interior became overloaded. The natural consequence was, that the heart, on whose power the propulsion of the blood to the extremities depends, being over stimulated and oppressed by the condition of the large vessels, became weakened; and, occasionally failing in the regular and equable transmission of the blood, would produce a sensation of distress in the region of the chest." The malady, thus produced, becoming more and more severe, Mr. Hall, when in London in 1828, was persuaded by his friends to take the advice of an eminent physician: from which, however, no permanent good resulted. By the summer of 1830, the disorder had increased so seriously that his medical friends at Bristol recommended a suspension of his pastoral duties for a few weeks, that he might try the effect of a total change of air and scene.

He therefore spent some time at Coleford, in the forest of Dean, in the society of his old and valued friend the Rev. Isaiah Birt. He also

spent a few weeks at Cheltenham. At both these places he preached with his accustomed talent; and his general appearance, too clearly indicating that the close of his ministerial labours was at hand, gave a deeper impression to his instructions and exhortations. When absent from home he was in the habit of writing to his children. My narrow limits have prevented my giving extracts from any of those letters; but I am induced to insert part of one, written at this time to his son, who had been placed with a respectable chymist and druggist at Bristol, in the hope that it may be useful to other youths in similar circumstances.

"My dear Robert, "15*th October*, 1830.

"I have long designed to write to you, that I might communicate to you some hints of advice, which I could convey more easily, and, perhaps, more effectually, than by speaking.

"I need not tell you, my dear boy, how solicitous I am for your welfare in both worlds, and how often I have borne you on my heart in my secret addresses to that Father which is in heaven. But, alas! the prayers of parents for their children will avail nothing, if they are not induced to pray for themselves, 'for every one must give an account of *himself* to God.' I hope, my dear child, you do not live in the entire neglect of this most important duty: let me entreat you to attend to it constantly, and never to begin or end a day without it. Daily entreat the pardon of your sins, for the sake of the Redeemer, and earnestly implore the assistance of his grace, to enable you to resist temptation, and to live in such a manner as shall prepare you for a blessed immortality. Pray do not neglect, at the same time, to read a portion, longer or shorter, of the Word of God. 'Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his ways, but by taking heed thereto according to thy Word?'

"I hope, my dear Robert, you will continue in your present situation. On the supposition of your doing so (and I can do nothing better for you), let me entreat you to make it your constant care to conciliate the esteem of Mr. C———, which you will certainly do, if you cheerfully comply with his orders, and make his interest your own. Nothing injures the character of a young man more than restlessness and fickleness; nothing, on the contrary, secures his credit and comfort like a steady and persevering attention to the duties of his station. Every situation has its inconveniences and its difficulties; but time and perseverance will surmount the one, and make you almost insensible of the other. The consciousness of having overcome difficulties, and combated trials successfully, will afford you, in the issue, a far higher satisfaction than you can ever hope to obtain by recoiling from them.

"Combat idleness in all its forms; nothing is so destructive as idle habits, nothing so useful as habits of industry.

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"Never demean yourself by contending about trifles; yield in things of small moment to the inclinations and humours of your companions. In a word, my dear boy, make yourself amiable.

"Fear God and love your fellow-creatures, and be assured you will find 'Wisdom's ways, ways of pleasantness, and her paths, paths of peace.'

"To say all in one word, 'If you are wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine.'

"I am

"Your affectionate father,

"Robert Hall."*

On Mr. Hall's return to Bristol towards the end of October, hopes were entertained that his health was improved, and his strength recruited; but they were only of short duration. The spasmodic affection of the chest occurred with increasing frequency, and in a more

* The youth to whom this letter was addressed went abroad soon after the decease of his father, and intelligence of his death has been received since these sheets were prepared for the press

alarming character. In one instance, on the 1st of January, 1831, the attack was so severe as to threaten immediate dissolution. It passed off, however, as former attacks had done, on taking blood from the arm; and soon afterward he returned to spend the remainder of the evening with the friends whom he had left when the paroxysm came on; and in his usual cheerful and happy spirit took his ordinary share, and evinced an undiminished interest, in the conversation.

The morning of that day had been signalized by the extraordinary pathos which he imparted to the religious services, at a prayer-meeting, held, according to annual custom, in the vestry at Broadmead. The intensity of his devotional feelings, and the fervour of his supplications in behalf of the assembled congregation, as well as the glowing affection and deep solemnity with which he addressed them, as he reviewed the past dispensations of Providence, and anticipated some of the probable events of the year now opening upon them, both in relation to them and himself, excited the strongest emotion, and, in connexion with the events that immediately followed, made an indelible impression upon their minds: nearly all his subsequent addresses, whether on the Sunday or the week-day evening services, partook, more or less, of the same pathetic and solemnly anticipatory character. One of the most impressive of these, of which many of the congregation retain a vivid recollection, was delivered on the morning of Sunday, January 16th. The text from which he preached was, Deuteronomy xxxiii. 25: "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be."

In this discourse he seemed to be preparing his people and himself for that event by which they were to be deprived of their invaluable pastor, and he to be freed from anguish and sorrow: when his soul, liberated from its chain, and clothed in the Redeemer's righteousness, was to go forth, "first into liberty, then into glory."

A highly valued correspondent,* whose communications greatly enrich this volume, enables me to present the following summary of Mr. Hall's application or improvement; which, from its occasion, as well as its excellence, cannot but be read with lively interest.

"Improvement. 1. Take no thought, no anxious, distressing, harassing thought for the morrow; suffer not your minds to be torn asunder by doubt or apprehension. Consider, rather, what is the *present* will of God, and rest satisfied and content; without anticipating evils which may never arrive.

"Do not heighten your present sorrows by a morbid imagination. You know not what a day may bring forth. The future is likely to be *better* than you expect, as well as worse. The real victory of Christians arises from *attention to present duty*. This carries them from strength to strength.

"Some are alarmed at the thought of death; they say, How shall I meet the agonies of dissolution? But when you are called to die, you will, if among God's children, receive dying consolation. Be satisfied if you have the strength to live to God, and God will support you when you come to die. Some fear persecution, lest, at such a season, they should 'make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience:' 'As thy day is, such shall thy strength be.'

"2. Consider to what it is we owe our success. If we are nearer our salvation than when we believed, let us not ascribe it to ourselves, to our own arm, but to the grace of God: 'Not I, but the grace of God with me,' enabling me to sustain, and to conquer. If we continue, it is 'because we have obtained help of God:' we are '*kept* by his mighty power unto salvation.' In all our sufferings, if Christians, we are perpetually indebted to Divine succour.

* The Rev. Thomas Grinfield, A.M., of Clifton, near Bristol.

"3. Let us habitually look up to God, in the exercise of faith and prayer Instead of yielding ourselves to dejection, let us plead the promises, and flee to the Divine Word. He has been accustomed to sustain the faithful: and He is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' He is never weary: look to Him. 'they that wait on him shall mount up with eagles' wings; run, and not be weary; walk, and not faint.' Go to Him in prayer,—cling to His strength,—lay hold on His arm. You have a powerful Redeemer: 'be strong in the power of His might!' Draw down the succours of His grace, which will enable you to go on, 'from strength to strength,' until you appear before God in Zion."

The last service at Broadmead in which Mr. Hall took any part was the church meeting (when only the members of the church are assembled) on Wednesday the 9th of February. His closing prayer on that occasion is spoken of as most spiritual and elevated, exhibiting in its highest manifestation the peculiar union of humility, benevolence, and fervour, by which his devotional exercises had very long been char acterized.

On the next evening, Thursday, the usual monthly sermon preparatory to the administration of the Lord's Supper was to have been delivered; but Mr. Hall's discharge of this duty was prevented by a severe attack of the complaint in his chest, which came on just after he had retired to his study to prepare for that service. This was the commencement of the series of paroxysms which terminated in his dissolution.

"Early on the Sunday morning (I again quote one of the letters of my esteemed friend Mr. Addington) being requested to see him, I found him in a condition of extreme suffering and distress. The pain in his back had been uncommonly severe during the whole night, and compelled him to multiply, at very short intervals, the doses of his anodyne, until he had taken no less than 125 grains of solid opium, equal to more than 3,000 drops, or nearly four ounces, of laudanum!! This was the only instance in which I had ever seen him at all overcome by the soporific quality of the medicine; and it was, even then, hard to determine whether the effect was owing so much to the quantity administered as to the unusual circumstance of its not having proved, even for a short time, an effectual antago nist to the pain it was expected to relieve.

"Inured as he was to the endurance of pain, and unaccustomed to any strong expression of complaint, he was forced to confess that his present agony was unparalleled by any thing in his former experience. The opium having failed tc assuage his pain, he was compelled to remain in the horizontal posture; but while in this situation, a violent attack in his chest took place, which in its turn rendered an upright position of the body no less indispensable. The struggle that ensued between these opposing and alike urgent demands became most appalling, and it was difficult to imagine that he could survive it; especially, as from the extreme prostration of vital energy, the remedy by which the latter of those affections had often been mitigated, viz. bleeding, could not be resorted to. Powerful stimulants, such as brandy, opium, ether, and ammonia, were the only resources; and, in about an hour from my arrival, we had the satisfaction of finding him greatly relieved and expressing his lively gratitude to God.

"The whole of his demeanour throughout this agonizing crisis, as well as during the remainder of the day, a day of much suffering, exhibited, in a striking degree, the efficacy of Christian faith and hope, in supporting and tranquillizing the mind of their possessor, in a season of extreme and torturing affliction. His language abounded with expressions at once of the deepest humility and of thankfulness to God for his 'unspeakable mercies,'—together with affectionate acknowledgments of the care and assiduities of his family and the friends around him."

From this time the paroxysms increased rapidly both in frequency and severity; and Mr. Hall, in the intervals between their occurrence, was usually so weak and exhausted as seldom to be able to converse with those around him. His expressions, however, insulated and broken as they often were, proved that he was able fully to exercise that trust in God which is the grand principle of religion, and that thus trusting in

him, his soul was kept in peace. No murmuring, no language of irritability escaped from his lips.

It is not my intention to dwell upon the melancholy detail of the ten days previous to his death. I will only record a few such expressions as serve to show that, acute as were his sufferings, God left him not without support.

Thus, when he first announced his apprehension that he should never again minister among his people, he immediately added, "But I am in God's hands, and I rejoice that I am. I am God's creature, at his disposal, for life or death; and that is a great mercy."

Again, "I have not one anxious thought, either for life or death. What I dread most are dark days. But I have had none yet: and I hope I shall not have any."

Again, "I fear pain more than death. If I could die easily, I think I would rather go than stay; for I have seen enough of the world, and I have an humble hope."

On another occasion, a friend having said to him, 'This God will be our God,' he replied, "Yes, he will,—he will be our guide even unto death."

On recovering from one of his severe paroxysms, he adverted to the affectionate attentions of his beloved wife and daughters, as well as his numerous comforts, and exclaimed, "What a mercy it is to have so many alleviations! I might have been deprived of all these comforts; —I might have been in poverty; I might have been the most abject wretch on the face of the earth."

During one night, in which the attacks were a little mitigated in number and severity, he frequently expressed the most lively gratitude to God, as well as his simple, unshaken reliance on his Saviour; and repeated nearly the whole of Robinson's beautiful hymn.

"Come, thou Fount of every blessing!
Tune my heart to sing thy grace;
Streams of mercy never ceasing
Call for songs of endless praise!" &c.

The same night, under one of the paroxysms, he said to the friend who was with him, "Why should a living man complain? a man for the punishment of his sins? I have not complained, have I, sir?—and I won't complain."

When Dr. Prichard was invited to join Mr. Chandler and Mr. Addington in consultation, on his arrival Mr. Hall arose and received him so much in his wonted cordial, courteous manner, as, at the first moment, almost to check the apprehension of danger. On the evening of the same day, he expatiated on the mercy of God in bringing him to close his life at Bristol.

His prevailing kindness was evinced throughout, in his solicitude for the comfort of those who sat up with him at night, or who remained in the house to be called to his assistance if necessary. He also exhorted the members of his family, and others occasionally present, to make religion the chief, the incessant concern; urging especially upon some of the young among his friends the duty of openly professing their attachment to Christ and his cause.

When he was a little recovered from one of his severe paroxysms, "I asked him," says Mr. Chandler, "whether he felt much pain. He replied that his sufferings were great: 'but what,' he added, 'are my sufferings to the sufferings of Christ? his sufferings were infinitely greater: his sufferings were complicated: God has been very merciful to me—very merciful: I am a poor creature—an unworthy creature; but God has been very kind—very merciful.' He then alluded to the character of the sufferings of crucifixion, remarking how intense and insufferable

they must have been, and asked many minute questions on what I might suppose was the process by which crucifixion brought about death. He particularly inquired respecting the effect of pain—the nervous irritation—the thirst—the oppression of breathing—the disturbance of the circulation—and the hurried action of the heart, till the conversation gradually brought him to a consideration of his own distress; when he again reverted to the lightness of his sufferings when contrasted with those of Christ. He spoke of our Lord's 'enduring the contradiction of sinners against himself'—of the ingratitude and unkindness he received from those for whom he went about doing good—of the combination of the mental and corporeal agonies sustained on the cross—the length of time during which our Lord hung—the exhaustion occasioned, &c. He then remarked how differently he had been situated; that though he had endured as much or more than fell to the lot of most men, yet all had been in mercy. I here remarked to him, that with most persons the days of ease and comfort were far more numerous than those of pain and sorrow. He replied, 'But I have been a great sufferer in my time: it is, however, generally true: the dispensations of God have been merciful to me.' He then observed, that a contemplation of the sufferings of Christ was the best antidote against impatience under any troubles we might experience; and recommended me to reflect much on this subject when in pain or distress, or in expectation of death.*

"During the whole of this severe illness, he read much in Campbell's translation of the Gospels; and, at intervals, one of his daughters read to him, from this version, his favourite to the last. On the morning of the 21st, the day on which he died, he had it laid before him, as usual, and read it himself in his ordinary recumbent attitude."

Mrs. Hall, in the course of this morning, remarking to him that he appeared better, and expressing her hopes that he would recover; he replied, "Ah! my dear, let us *hope* for the best, and *prepare* for the worst." He then stated his opinion that this day would be critical. When his medical attendants met in consultation, a little after noon, he seemed rather better; and Mr. Chandler left him, between one and two reclining on the sofa, leaning on his elbow with as much muscular energy as ever.

"Before leaving him," he remarks, "I explained to him the plan of proceeding to be observed; on which he bowed, saying, that whatever we wished he would comply with, he would do whatever we desired; begging that he might not interfere with my duties to other patients, and adding that he thought he should be very comfortable till my return.

"In a very short time, and before I had reached home, I was summoned to behold the last agonizing scene of this great and extraordinary man. His difficulty of breathing had suddenly increased to a dreadful and final paroxysm. It seems this last paroxysm came on more gradually than was usual with those which preceded. Mr. Hall, finding his breathing becoming much worse, first rose more on his elbow, then raised his body, supporting himself with his hand, till the increasing agitation obliged him to rise completely on the sofa, and to place his feet in hot water—the usual means he resorted to for relief in every paroxysm. Mrs. Hall, observing a fixation of his eyes, and an unusual expression on his countenance, and indeed in his whole manner, became alarmed by the sudden impression that he was dying; and exclaimed in great agitation, 'This can't be dying!' when he replied, 'It is death—it is death—death! Oh the sufferings of this body!' Mrs. Hall then asking him, 'But are you comfortable in your mind?' he immediately answered, 'Very comfortable—very comfortable!' and exclaimed, 'Come, Lord Jesus—Come.' He then hesitated, as if incapable of bringing out the last word; and one of his daughters, involuntarily, as it were, anticipated him by saying, 'Quickly!' on which her departing father gave her a look expressive of the most complacent delight.

"On entering his room, I found him sitting on the sofa, surrounded by his lamenting family; with one foot in the hot water, and the other spasmodically

* Chandler's Authentic Account, p 28

grasping the edge of the bath; his frame waving in violent, almost convulsive heavings, sufficiently indicative of the process of dissolution. I hastened, though despairingly, to administer such stimulants as might possibly avert the threatening termination of life; and as I sat by his side for this purpose he threw his arm over my shoulders for support, with a look of evident satisfaction that I was near him. He said to me, 'I am dying: death is come at last: all will now be useless.' As I pressed upon him draughts of stimulants, he intimated that he would take them if I wished; but he believed all was useless. On my asking him if he suffered much, he replied, 'Dreadfully.' The rapidly increasing gasping soon overpowered his ability to swallow, or to speak, except in monosyllables, few in number, which I could not collect; but, whatever might be the degree of his suffering (and great it must have been), there was no failure of his mental vigour or composure. Indeed, so perfect was his consciousness, that in the midst of these last agonies, he intimated to me very shortly before the close, with his accustomed courteousness, a fear lest he should fatigue me by his pressure; and when his family, one after another, gave way in despair, he followed them with sympathizing looks, as they were obliged to be conveyed from the room. This was his last voluntary movement; for immediately a general convulsion seized him, and he quickly expired."*

O! how inconceivably blessed is the change, when, at the moment of utmost agony, the soul enters the regions of endless joy; passes from the land of the dying to the land of the living; from the society of saints to the blissful presence of the King of saints, where knowledge, illumination, purity, and love flow for ever and ever from the Inexhaustible Fountain! Such is the ineffable reward which awaits all the faithful followers of the Lamb. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."

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Nothing, I feel, would be more presumptuous than for me to attempt to portray fully the literary, intellectual, or religious character of my inestimable friend.† I have known, and still know, many whom I greatly value, many whom I cordially love and admire, many from whom I have learned much and might have learned more, but for my incapacity to receive what they were ready to impart; but I have known none in whom so many elements of mental and moral greatness were so happily combined as in Mr. Hall; none whose converse and whose diversified knowledge have so constantly interested, charmed, and instructed me; none whose transcendent qualities excited so high and overawing a veneration, yet none whose humility and cordiality, exquisitely blending with genius and piety, inspired so unhesitating a confidence.

His profound acquaintance with the mind and heart, and his corresponding faculty of tracing and separating the springs of human action, gave him an unusual influence with the present race as a sacred orator: while he seems to be one of the few men whose creative intellect, and whose singular ability in the development of religious truth, and the illustration and confirmation of many principles of universal and increasing interest, qualify them to operate with as extensive an influence in moulding the intellectual and moral character of succeeding generations.

His varied and extraordinary powers, thus diffusively applied to the most momentous subjects, will be seen from his "Works," which are now collected that they may constitute his noblest monument, the most enduring tribute to his memory.

* See Note D, Appendix.

† For some interesting sketches which, together, will assist in correctly estimating Mr. Hall's character, see Note E, Appendix.

# APPENDIX

## NOTE A.—[See page 35.]

### MISCELLANEOUS GLEANINGS FROM MR. HALL'S CONVERSATIONAL REMARKS.

I AM perfectly well aware that no memoranda can convey an adequate idea of the vivacity, originality, and brilliancy of Mr. Hall's conversational powers. It was usually easy to remember the sentiments which he expressed, and sometimes the images, whether sportive or tasteful, by which he illustrated them; but the beautiful language in which his remarks in conversation were clothed could seldom be recalled, except when he fully communicated his meaning in a very short but happily turned phrase.

This note, therefore, while it may serve to record some of his sentiments and opinions on interesting topics, must be understood as giving a very faint notion of his manner of expressing himself, except in those cases where the language, at once brief, clear, and characteristic, fixed itself indelibly upon the memory.

The connected series, first presented, has been kindly transmitted by the Rev. Robert Balmer, of Berwick-upon-Tweed, and is selected from his recollections of the substance of three or four conversations which he had with Mr. Hall in the years 1819 and 1823.

In the course of some remarks on various theological writers of our own times, he said, "Dr. Smith is the best Biblical critic with whom I am personally acquainted; and I should think him one of the most learned theologians now alive." On my asking, if he did not consider Archbishop Magee superior in ability, and equal in learning, to Dr. Smith? he replied, with his usual decision, "Not nearly equal in learning, sir; I do not suppose that Archbishop Magee knows any thing about the German critics, with whom Dr. Smith is intimately acquainted, and from whom, notwithstanding all their absurdity and impiety, much may unquestionably be learned. There is one thing," he added, "in Dr. Smith's work, much to be lamented; and that is, the tone of excessive lenity maintained towards his opponents. In consequence of this, his reasonings will not produce an effect proportioned to their intrinsic force; and his readers are tempted to regard the opinions which he refutes with far less horror than they deserve. The proper tone in theological controversy is, I imagine, somewhere between Bishop Horsley's intolerable arrogance and asperity, and Dr. Smith's unwarrantable softness and urbanity."

On informing him that I had been perplexed with doubts as to the extent of the death of Christ, and expressing a wish to know his opinion, he replied, "There, sir, my sentiments give me the advantage of you; for on that point I entertain no doubts whatever: I believe firmly in 'general redemption;' I often preach it, and I consider the fact that 'Christ died for all men' as the only basis that can support the universal offer of the gospel."—"But you admit the doctrine of election, which necessarily implies limitation. Do you not think that election and particular redemption are inseparably connected?"—"I believe firmly," he rejoined, "in election, but I do not think it involves particular redemption; I consider the sacrifice of Christ as a remedy, not only adapted, but intended for all,

and as placing all in a salvable state; as removing all barriers to their salvation, except such as arise from their own perversity and depravity. But God foresaw or knew that none would accept the remedy, merely of themselves, and therefore, by what may be regarded as a separate arrangement, he resolved to glorify his mercy, by effectually applying salvation to a certain number of our race, through the agency of his Holy Spirit. I apprehend, then, that the limiting clause implied in election refers not to the purchase but to the application of redemption." This representation seemed to me, at the time, to be encumbered with considerable difficulties; and I was not sure that I correctly apprehended it. Not choosing, however, to request Mr. H. to repeat or elucidate his statements, I asked him if he could refer me to any book where I should find what he regarded as the Scripture doctrine on the subject, stated and illustrated. He referred me to a book to which Dr. Smith, of Homerton, had, not many days before, referred me, in answer to a similar question,—Bellamy's "True Religion delineated."

In the course of our conversation respecting the extent of Christ's death, Mr. Hall expatiated at considerable length on the number and variety of the Scripture expressions, in which it seems to be either explicitly asserted or necessarily implied, that it was intended, not for the elect exclusively, but for mankind generally, such as "the world," "all," "all men," "every man," &c. He made some striking remarks on the danger of twisting such expressions from their natural and obvious import, and on the absurdity of the interpretations put on them by some of the advocates of particular redemption. He mentioned, especially, the absurdity of explaining "the world," John iii. 16, to signify the elect world, as the text would then teach that some of the elect may not believe. He noticed, further, that the doctrine of general redemption was not only asserted expressly in many texts, but presupposed in others, such as "Destroy not with thy meat," &c., and "Denying the Lord that bought them;" and that it was incorporated with other parts of the Christian system, particularly with the universal offers and invitation of the gospel.

On the question of church government, Mr. H.'s sentiments seemed to me undecided, and somewhat inconsistent; and by many they would have been regarded as latitudinarian. He expressed his doubts whether any one form or model was delineated in the New Testament, as obligatory in all ages and in all circumstances; and said that he was much disposed to adopt the maxim, "Whatever is best administered is best." In another conversation, when mention was made of a church, which, along with its minister, had been guilty of a scandalous irregularity in a matter of discipline, I stated what would be done in such circumstances among Presbyterians, and put the question, Will the neighbouring churches and ministers not interfere? Mr. H. intimated that they ought to remonstrate and advise; but that any claim to jurisdiction would, in his apprehension, be altogether unwarrantable; adding, that the independence of churches appeared to him a principle expressly sanctioned by the Word of God.

With regard to the question of "Terms of Communion," we had repeated conversations. On this subject he spoke with uncommon interest and animation; and seemed surprised at the arguments of those who were opposed to his views. I recollect, in particular, the effect produced on him, when I stated that I had heard Dr. Lawson, of Selkirk, declare, that he would not admit a Roman Catholic, not even Fenelon or Pascal, to the table of the Lord: Mr. H., who had been previously reclining on three chairs, instantly raised himself on his elbow, and spoke without intermission and with great rapidity for nearly a quarter of an hour; expatiating on the amazing absurdity and presumption of rejecting those whom Christ receives, and of refusing to hold communion on earth with those with whom we hope to associate in heaven. During all this time his manner was exceedingly vehement, his other arm was in continual motion, and his eyes, naturally most piercing, were lighted up with unusual brilliancy.

It was interesting and amusing to observe how Mr. Hall's exquisite sensibility to literary beauty intermingled with and qualified the operation of his principles and leanings, both as a Christian and dissenter. Of this I recollect various instances; but shall give only one. While conversing respecting Archbishop Magee, hi

talents, sentiments, conduct, &c., I quoted, as a proof of his high-church principles, a remark from a charge then newly published: it was to this effect: That the Roman Catholics have a church without a religion; the dissenters have a religion without a church; but the Establishment has both a church and a religion. Mr. Hall had not heard the remark before, and was exceedingly struck with it. "That, sir," he exclaimed, smiling, "is a beautiful saying. I have not heard so fine an observation for a long time. It is admirable, sir."—"You admire it, I presume, for its point, not for its truth."—*H.* "I admire it, sir, for its plausibility and cleverness. It is false, and yet it seems to contain a mass of truth. It is an excellent stone for a churchman to pelt with."

After speaking of Antinomians, of whom it appeared there were then several in the neighbourhood of Leicester: "Pray, sir," said he, "have you got any Antinomians in Scotland?"—"None," I replied, "who avow themselves such. There are individuals in our congregations who have what I consider a morbid aversion to practical preaching, and to a minute enforcement of duty; but almost all our people who know and care any thing about religion will tell you, that although the believer is delivered from the law as a covenant of works, he is subject to it as a rule of life."—"That," said Mr. H. "is precisely what I expected. Your ministers and your people have too much information to be ensnared by such impieties. Antinomianism is a monster which can live only in darkness; bring light on it, and it expires."

The following opinions were expressed by Mr. H. respecting various writers in theology. I give them in the form of dialogue, inserting, of course, such questions and remarks of my own as led to his observations. Let it be remembered at the same time, that they are only fragments, as, in many instances, I do not now recollect more than a third or fourth part of what was said.

*B.* "May I ask, sir, what writers you would most recommend to a young minister?"—*H.* "Why, sir, I feel very incompetent to give directions on that head; I can only say that I have learned far more from John Howe than from any other author I ever read. There is an astonishing magnificence in his conceptions. He had not the same perception of the beautiful as of the sublime; and hence his endless subdivisions."—*B.* "That was the fault of his age."—*H.* "In part, sir, but he has more of it than many of the writers of that period, than Barrow, for example, who was somewhat earlier. There was, I think, an innate inaptitude in Howe's mind for discerning minute graces and proprieties, and hence his sentences are often long and cumbersome. Still he was unquestionably the greatest of the puritan divines."

After adverting to several of Howe's works, Mr. H. said, in reference to his "Blessedness of the Righteous," "Perhaps Baxter's 'Saint's Rest' is fitted to make a deeper impression on the majority of readers. Baxter enforces a particular idea with extraordinary clearness, force, and earnestness. His appeals to the conscience are irresistible. Howe, again, is distinguished by calmness, self-possession, majesty, and comprehensiveness; and for my own part, I decidedly prefer him to Baxter. I admire, exceedingly, his 'Living Temple,' his sermon on the 'Redeemer's Tears,' &c.; but, in my opinion, the best thing he ever wrote is his defence of the sincerity of the gospel offer. I refer to the treatise called the 'Reconcileableness of God's Prescience of the Sins of Men, with his Counsels, Exhortations, and whatever other Means he used to prevent them.' This I regard as the most profound, the most philosophical, and the most valuable of all Howe's writings."

*B.* "Do you think highly of Dr. Owen?"—*H.* "No, sir, by no means.—Have *you* read much of Owen, sir; do you admire him?"—*B.* "I have read his Preliminary Exercitations to his great work on the Hebrews; his exposition of particular verses here and there; his book on church government; and some of his smaller treatises. I do not greatly admire him, nor have I learned much from him."—*H.* "You astonish me, sir, by your patience. You have accomplished an Herculean undertaking in reading Owen's Preliminary Exercitations. To me he is intolerably heavy and prolix."—*B.* "I do think, sir, there are many valuable ideas in his writings; but, as a reasoner, he seems to me singularly illogical; for he often takes for granted the thing to be proved."—*H.* "I quite concur with the

latter part of your statement. As a reasoner, Dr. Owen is most illogical, for he almost always takes for granted what he ought to prove; while he is always proving what he ought to take for granted; and, after a long digression, he concludes very properly with, 'This is not our concernment,' and returns to enter on something still farther from the point."

I remarked that Jonathan Edwards's theory was opposed to our consciousness and our indestructible feelings; for, whenever we blamed ourselves for having acted wrong, we had an irresistible belief, not only that we could have acted otherwise if we had chosen, but that we could have willed otherwise. To all this Mr. H. readily assented, adding some remarks respecting two of Edwards's distinctions: the distinction between liberty to will, and liberty to act according to our will; and that between natural and moral necessity. Respecting the one of these (I do not precisely remember which) Mr. H. made the following ludicrous but characteristic observations.

"That distinction, sir, lies at the basis of Edwards's theory; but it is not original. It is to be found in the works of Dr. Owen: I think it certain that Edwards found it there, buried, like the rest of Owen's ideas, amid a heap of rubbish; and, finding it there, he did what Owen had not strength of arm to do, took a firm grasp of it, and dragged it into light. It proved a monster, and ought to have been smothered; but Edwards found it would be useful to frighten the enemies of Divine sovereignty and free grace, and therefore, instead of smothering it, he nursed it."

Mr. Hall made some inquiry respecting Dr. Henry, the historian, once a minister in Berwick, and afterward colleague of Dr. Macknight, the commentator, in one of the churches in Edinburgh: I informed him, that from all I had ever heard, I believed Dr. Henry must have been a very dry and uninteresting preacher. This led to a reference to the well-known anecdote relative to these two individuals; according to which, the one when coming to church on a Sabbath morning, having got his clothes wet by a heavy rain, asked his colleague to officiate for him. "Go into the pulpit," said the other, "and you will be dry enough." Some doubt being expressed which of the two it was to whom this remark was made, Mr. H. observed, "I suppose, sir, it was applicable to both." Immediately checking himself, he added, "And yet, I should think, that to an intellectual audience, an audience that had any relish for Scripture exposition, Macknight must have been interesting, if the discourses which he preached resembled his published writings."—"Pray, sir," I said, "do you admire Macknight as a commentator?"—"Yes, sir," he replied, "I do, very much; I think it would be exceedingly difficult, indeed, to come after him in expounding the apostolic epistles. I admit, at the same time, that he has grievous deficiencies: there is a lamentable want of spirituality and elevation about him. He never sets his foot in the other world if he can get a hole to step into in this; and he never gives a passage a meaning which would render it applicable and useful in all ages, if he can find in it any local or temporary allusion. He makes fearful havoc, sir, of the text on which you preached to-day. His exposition of it is inimitably absurd." The text referred to was Ephesians i. 8, "Wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence;" and the "wisdom and prudence" are explained by Macknight, not of the wisdom of God, as displayed in the scheme of redemption, but of the wisdom and prudence granted to the apostles to enable them to discharge their office.

Mr. Hall repeatedly referred to Dr. ——, and always in high admiration of his general character. The following are some remarks, respecting that extraordinary individual. "Pray, sir, did you ever know any man who had that singular faculty of repetition possessed by Dr. ——? Why, sir, he often reiterates the same thing ten or twelve times in the course of a few pages. Even Burke himself had not so much of that peculiarity. His mind resembles that optical instrument lately invented; what do you call it?"—*B.* "You mean, I presume, the kaleidoscope."—*H.* "Yes, sir, it is just as if thrown into a kaleidoscope. Every turn presents the object in a new and beautiful form; but the object presented is still the same. Have you not been struck, sir, with the degree in which Dr. —— possesses this faculty?"—"Do you not think, sir," I replied, "that he has either

far too much of this faculty, or that he indulges it to a faulty excess?"—*H.* "Yes, sir, certainly; his mind seems to move on hinges, not on wheels. There is incessant motion, but no progress. When he was at Leicester, he preached a most admirable sermon on the necessity of immediate repentance; but there were only two ideas in it, and on these his mind revolved as on a pivot."

On metaphysics and moral philosophy we talked at great length; but I cannot now give a tolerable specimen of his acute and eloquent remarks. One of his observations, however, I do remember, which struck me at the time as exceedingly just and happy. Much had been said respecting the utility or inutility of metaphysical studies, and respecting the fact that they as yet had led to no useful discoveries. I made some such remark as this, that admitting such studies did not terminate in profitable discoveries, still they were advantageous as a field for cultivating and invigorating the mental powers. Mr. H. said, "An *arena*, not a *field* Metaphysics yield no fruit. They are not a field, they are only an arena, to which a man who has got nothing to do may go down sometimes, and try his skill in intellectual gladiatorship. This, at present, is their chief recommendation."

Of the literary characters respecting whom we conversed, there was none whom he praised so highly as his friend Sir James Mackintosh, and the following fragments will convey some idea of Mr. Hall's estimate of that distinguished and lamented person. "I know no man," he said repeatedly and emphatically, "equal to Sir James in talents. The powers of his mind are admirably balanced. He is defective only in imagination." At this last statement I expressed my surprise, remarking that I never could have suspected that the author of the eloquent oration for Peltier was deficient in fancy. "Well, sir," said Mr. H., "I don't wonder at your remark. The truth is, he has imagination, too; but with him imagination is an acquisition rather than a faculty. He has, however, plenty of embellishment at command; for his memory retains every thing. His mind is a spacious repository, hung round with beautiful images, and when he wants one he has nothing to do but reach up his hand to a peg, and take it down. But his images were not manufactured in his mind; they were imported."—*B.* "If he be so defective in imagination, he must be incompetent to describe scenes and delineate characters vividly and graphically; and I should apprehend, therefore, he will not succeed in writing history."—*H.* "Sir, I do not expect him to produce an eloquent or interesting history. He has, I fear, mistaken his province. His genius is best adapted for metaphysical speculation; but, had he chosen moral philosophy, he would probably have surpassed every living writer."—*B.* "I admired exceedingly some of his philosophical papers in the Edinburgh Review, his articles, for instance, on Madame de Staël's Germany, and on Dugald Stewart's Preliminary Dissertation; but there seemed to me a heaviness about them, and I do think that Mr. Jeffrey could expound a metaphysical theory with more vivacity and effect."—*H.* "With more vivacity, perhaps, but not with equal judgment or acuteness. He would not go so deep, sir; I am persuaded that if Sir James Mackintosh had enjoyed leisure, and had exerted himself, he would have completely outdone Jeffrey and Stewart, and all the metaphysical writers of our times."

Of Dugald Stewart Mr. H. spoke slightingly; and it seemed to me that he was somewhat prejudiced against that amiable and accomplished philosopher, in consequence of unfavourable reports which had reached him respecting Mr. Stewart's religious sentiments. "He is," said Mr. H. "a pleasing, but a feeble writer. I would never compare him with any of our great metaphysicians; with Malebranche, or Locke, or Berkeley, or even with Tucker. Reid had a more vigorous and original mind than Stewart; and Campbell, I suspect, was superior to both. If Campbell had devoted his attention to mental philosophy, he could have done all that Reid or Stewart has accomplished; but neither of them could have written the 'Preliminary Dissertations' to his work on the Gospels. There is also too much egotism and parade about Dugald Stewart. He is always polishing away at the corner of a subject; but he could not rear a system of his own."

This comparison Mr. Hall followed out at considerable length, and in language exceedingly beautiful and magnificent; which, however, I cannot now recall. With regard to Stewart's style, Mr. H. observed, "That it was unquestionably

one of the finest philosophical styles that ever was written; that Mr. S. had carried embellishment farther into the region of metaphysics than any author that had preceded him; and that his embellishment was invariably consistent with perfect sobriety of taste."

Of Dr. Thomas Brown, Mr. Hall observed, "That he was a man of more genius, but less judgment, than his predecessor; that his style, with all its beauties, was far inferior to Stewart's as a vehicle for philosophical speculation; that it was deficient in clearness and precision; and so exceedingly diffuse, that all that was valuable in the four volumes of his lectures might be condensed into one." I remarked that Dr. Brown was often the victim of his own ingenuity, that, in point of candour, he was immeasurably inferior to Stewart; that the former would never agree with any writer if he could possibly differ from him, and that the latter would never differ from any one if he could possibly agree with him. Mr. Hall acquiesced in substance in these remarks, and proceeded to comment on Dr. B.'s amazing boldness and originality. He characterized briefly several of his lectures, stating that those which had most deeply interested him, and which he thought among the best, were the "Lectures on the Immateriality and the Immutability of the Soul."

Mr. H. mentioned that he had read a considerable portion of Kant's works. On my remarking that I knew nothing of that philosopher except from Dr. Thomas Brown's article upon him, in an early number of the Edinburgh Review, and from Madame de Staël's book on Germany; that I should suppose his writings to be utterly unintelligible and uninteresting; Mr. H. replied, "It is certainly no great loss to be ignorant of Kant's works. His philosophy is a system of skepticism." In answer to his question, "whether I had read much of Madame de Staël's works," I informed him that I had read her "Remarks on Rousseau," one of her novels, and her book on Germany. *H.* "Did you read her book on Germany from beginning to end?"—*B.* "I did."—*H.* "I admire your patience more and more, sir." He added that he had looked into Madame de Staël's Germany; that on finding some philosopher, a well-known idealist (I cannot at this moment recollect who it was), spoken of as an opponent of the ideal theory, he had thrown aside the book in disgust; supposing that very little could be learned from a writer so ill-informed as to be capable of such a blunder. He seemed very reluctant to allow that many of her remarks were acute and ingenious; and when something was said about the flights of her fancy, he said, "that, for his part, he could not admire her flights, for to him she was generally invisible; not because she ascended to a great height above the earth, but because she invariably selected a foggy atmosphere."

To the preceding selections from Mr. Balmer's communication may be added a few of Mr. Hall's remarks, rapidly thrown off on various occasions, taken from the letters of different friends.

On the return of the Bourbons to France, in 1814, a gentleman called upon Mr. Hall, in the expectation that he would express himself in terms of the utmost delight on account of that signal event. Mr. Hall said, "I am sorry for it, sir. The cause of knowledge, science, freedom, and pure religion on the Continent will be thrown back half a century; the intrigues of the Jesuits will be revived; and popery will be resumed in France with all its mummery, but with no power, except the power of persecution." This opinion was expressed about six weeks before the issuing of the pope's bull for the revival of the order of Jesuits in Europe, 7th August, 1814.

A few years afterward, Mr. Hall, on an allusion being made to the battle of Waterloo, remarked, "I have scarcely thought of the unfulfilled prophecies since that event. It overturned all the interpretations which had been previously advanced by those who had been thought sound theologians, and gave new energy to the pope and the Jesuits, both of whom seemed rapidly coming to nothing, as the prediction seemed to teach. That battle, and its results, seemed to me to put back the clock of the world six degrees."

Notwithstanding his decided sentiments as a whig and a reformer, he manifested through life a reverence for ancient institutions, rank, and illustrious

descent. He was present in Westminster Abbey at Handel's Commemoration, and saw the King (George III.) stand up in one part of the performance of the Messiah, shedding tears. Nothing, he said, had ever affected him more strongly. "It seemed like a great act of national assent to the fundamental truths of religion." He was most accurately acquainted with the descents and dependencies of our principal noble families.

More than once have I heard him, with affectionate respect, mention Dr. Ryder, the present Bishop of Lichfield, whom he had known as a pious and useful parish clergyman in the neighbourhood of Leicester. "He has not been injured," said Mr. H., "by promotion; he is the same man as a bishop that he was as the laborious parish priest; to such a bishop we may apply the apocalyptic title, 'an angel of the church.' We may say of him what St. John says of Demetrius, that he 'has good report of all men, and of the truth itself.'".

Speaking of Mrs. H. More's writings (about twenty years ago), he eulogized them very highly. He thought that she and Mr. Wilberforce had done more for the cause of Christianity by writing than any other persons living. Somebody mentioned a review of one of her books in the ——, written by Miss ——. "Miss ——, sir," said Mr. Hall, "Miss —— think of reviewing Mrs. More! Sir, it is like throwing soft peas against a rock."

On being asked if he had read the Life of Bishop Watson, then (in 1818) recently published, he replied that he had, and regretted it, as it had lowered his estimate of the bishop's character. Being asked why, he expressed his reluctance to enlarge upon the subject; but added, "Poor man, I pity him! He married public virtue in his early days, but seemed for ever afterward to be quarrelling with his wife."

He did not like Dr. Gill as an author. When Mr. Christmas Evans was in Bristol, he was talking to Mr. Hall about the Welch language, which he said was very copious and expressive. "How I wish, Mr. Hall, that Dr. Gill's works had been written in Welch."—"I wish they had, sir; I wish they had, with all my heart, for then I should never have read them. They are a continent of mud, sir."

John Wesley having been mentioned, he said, "The most extraordinary thing about him was, that while he set all in motion, he was himself perfectly calm and phlegmatic: he was the quiescence of turbulence."

He spoke of Whitfield as presenting a contrast in the mediocrity of his writings to the wonderful power of his preaching: of the latter there could be no doubt, however; but it was of a kind not to be represented in writing; "it is impossible to paint eloquence."

Speaking of Mr. ——'s composition: "Yes, it is very eloquent, but equally cold; it is the beauty of frost."

"Poor Mr. ——," a nervously modest man, "seems to beg pardon of all flesh for being in this world."

Some one observing to Mr. Hall that his animation increased with his years—"Indeed: then I am like touchwood; the more decayed, the easier fired."

Lord Byron was mentioned.—"I tried to read Childe Harold, but could not get on, and gave it up."—"Have you read the fourth canto, sir, which is by far the best?"—"Oh no, sir, I shall never think of trying."—"But, sir, independently of the mere poetry, it must be interesting to contemplate such a remarkable mind as Lord Byron's."—"It is well enough, sir, to have a general acquaintance with such a character; but I know not why we should take pleasure in minutely investigating deformity."

## NOTE B.—[See page 43.]

### QUOTATIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF SIR JAMES MACKINTOSH AND DR. PARR, RELATIVE TO MR. HALL.

1. *Extracts from a Review of Mr. Hall's Sermon on Modern Infidelity, written by Sir James Mackintosh. Published in the Monthly Review for February*, 1800.

As far as philosophy and eloquence can make a publication important, and as far as very peculiar circumstances can render it interesting, certainly no sermon of our times merits a more elaborate criticism than that of Mr. Hall.

A new sect of infidels has arisen in this age, who, with a boldness unknown to their predecessors, not only reject religion as *false*, but condemn it as *pernicious*. The great majority of former unbelievers were so far from denying its *usefulness*, that they represented it as an invention of statesmen for the very purpose of giving aid to morality and efficacy to the laws; but some of our modern infidels declare open war against every principle and form of religion, natural as well as revealed, as hostile to morality, and therefore destructive of the happiness of the human race. This extravagant and detestable paradox, which long lay neglected in the forgotten volumes of Cardan and Spinoza, is now revived and disseminated by men who possess the dangerous art of making paradoxes popular. Notwithstanding its evident and monstrous absurdity, it has gained many proselytes on the continent of Europe; and a few, we fear, even in this fortunate island; which, as it was the first country that was seized with the disease of infidelity, was the first also which was completely cured of that pestilential malady. Against this new sect a most vigorous and formidable attack is made in the sermon before us, by Mr. Hall, the pastor of a dissenting congregation at Cambridge; who, in his preface, most earnestly deprecates all contentions between different sects of Christians, in the presence of the common enemy; and who speaks of his being a dissenter only as a motive for generous emulation, and for vying with the church in zeal and vigour in defence of our common Christianity, in imitation of the ablest and most virtuous dissenters of former times.

"When at the distance of more than half a century, Christianity was assaulted by a *Woolston*, a *Tindal*, and a *Morgan*, it was ably supported, both by clergymen of the established church and writers among Protestant dissenters. The labours of a *Clarke* and a *Butler* were associated with those of a *Doddridge*, a *Leland*, and a *Lardner*, with such equal reputation and success as to make it evident that the intrinsic excellence of religion needs not the aid of external appendages; but that, with or without a dowry, her charms are of sufficient power to fix and engage the heart."

Happy will it be if this passage shall produce its proper effects both on the dissenters and on the clergy of the establishment; if it shall animate the former to a noble rivalship of exertion in the general cause of religion; and if it shall dispose the latter to view the dissenters no longer with suspicion on account of theological differences of inferior moment, and of *supposed* political differences, but to regard them with the affection which is due to fellow Christians, and fellow-soldiers in the army of religion and of truth. Unfortunate animosities and fatal suspicions have arisen between them, from causes which were, perhaps, irresistible. Neither party, probably, is entirely blameless. If the dissenters, following the example of Mr. Hall, will sacrifice the pride of a sect to the cause of religion, they will at least have the merit of making a fair experiment on the temper of the church; and it will be ascertained whether the established clergy of our days will receive the successors of Leland and Lardner as these illustrious men were received by the most distinguished prelates of their times. We have no doubt that the experiment would be successful, and that the result of such an amicable struggle would be a new triumph for Christianity, both in the defeat of her enemies, and in the closer union of all her children; in the establishment of Christian truth, and in

the diffusion of Christian charity: so that infidelity may at length not only be exposed, but shamed and silenced, and those sects which continue to differ in inferior questions of opinion and discipline may at least agree in forbearance and mutual kindness. Mr. Hall has shown the example to his brethren, and held out the invitation to those from whom he dissents. He has done his duty to his country and to his religion, and he has done it nobly. Let us hope that he has not sown his seed in a barren soil.

Though Mr. Hall, however, in our opinion, has victoriously established his principle with respect to this part of the subject [the power of religion in producing the higher class of virtues], he is with reason convinced that the *indirect* influence of religion, as it enters into our sentiments and forms our character, is much more extensive and important than its *direct* influence, as arising from a deliberate regard to the happiness or misery of another life, and from its fitness to fill up that chasm that is founded merely on the utility of virtue in the present world. It is on the subject of the *indirect* influence of religion that he has chiefly displayed all the powers of his vigorous understanding, and all the stores of his richly endowed mind. It is here that he exhibits a union of comprehensive philosophy with animated and splendid eloquence, of which few other examples are to be found. It is here, on a subject which has been discussed and (it might have been thought) exhausted by the greatest men of many successive ages, that Mr. Hall has given the most decisive proof of his genius, by many arguments and reflections which are at once original, just, and profound. Those who are familiar with moral discussions know the extreme difficulty of producing even a *new paradox* on subjects which have so often and so long employed all the powers of the human understanding. It is easy for men of sense to deliver very important moral truths, if they will content themselves with repeating and enforcing what has been often said before, which we are far from denying to be very useful, and indeed absolutely necessary. It is possible, though not easy, for men of ingenuity, if they merely seek singularity, and throw off all regard to truth and the interests of mankind, to discover some new path in the wilderness of error, which no former hunter of paradoxes had explored. To be *original* and *just*, however, is on all subjects very difficult; and it is a mark of the highest superiority of understanding, when displayed on a subject which seemed so nearly exhausted as the connexion between morality and religion.

If we were to indulge our own feelings without regard to the limits of our review, we should scarcely know when to finish our extracts, or how to bound our praises. This sermon, indeed, is in every respect entitled to rank among the first productions of the age. It is distinguished by solid and profound philosophy: the very reverse of that sorry and shallow sophistry which has of late usurped the name. It breathes a spirit of humility, piety, and charity; worthy of that pure and divine religion, to the defence of which the author has consecrated his talents. His eloquence is not a puny and gaudy bauble, fashioned by the tools and tricks of a mechanical rhetorician; it is the natural effusion of a fertile imagination, of an ardent mind, and of a heart glowing with zeal for truth, with reverence for God, and with love for men. His style is easy, various, and animated; not free, indeed, from those petty incorrectnesses, which seem to be scarcely separable from natural composition, but perfectly exempt from affectation—a blemish far more unpardonable than negligence, and into which those who too studiously avoid carelessness have in general been too liable to fall. On a review of all his various excellences, we cannot but expect with confidence that the name of Mr. Hall will be placed by posterity with the illustrious names of Paley and of Watson, among the best writers of the age, as well as the most vigorous defenders of religious truth, and the brightest examples of Christian charity.

2. *From Sir James Mackintosh's Review of Proceedings in the Case of Benjamin Flower. British Critic, August*, 1800.

He tells us in his preface, "There is no one living more guarded in bringing unsubstantial charges than myself." p. 17. He also observes, that "the mere change of sentiment is not in itself criminal, it is sometimes virtuous." p. 22

After these declarations, we should of course have expected that he would not have applied the most contumelious and opprobrious language to virtuous men, on no better pretext than that of a "mere change of sentiment." As this "change" might be "virtuous," all "charges" founded only upon it must be "unsubstantiated." Now mark the conduct of this man, and let him be tried by his own principles. Mr. Hall, his townsman, and, as we understand, formerly his pastor, is well known to have lately published a most admirable sermon, in which he employed all the powers of reason, and all the vigour and splendour of eloquence, in displaying the abominable consequences of atheism. "*The very head and front of his offending hath this extent, no farther.*" His whole guilt consisted in this: that, being a minister of Christianity, he had the *illiberality* and cruelty to attack poor atheism, and its meek and unbloody apostles, the amiable French republicans. For this great crime, this miserable scribbler attempts to raise a louder clamour against Mr. Hall than has been raised against other dissenting ministers for renouncing their belief in God. Bishops may be libelled, kings may be slandered, all laws, human and divine, may be insulted and reviled; but France and atheism are sacred things, which it seems no Englishman, or at least no dissenting minister, is to attack with impunity; which he cannot reason against without having his character stigmatized as a time-server; the warm language of his youth cited against his more mature opinions; and all the prejudices of his sect, or even of his congregation, artfully inflamed against his good name, his professional usefulness, and perhaps his professional existence. The black and fell malignity which pervades this man's attack on Mr. Hall raises it to a sort of diabolical importance, of which its folly, and ignorance, and vulgarity cannot entirely deprive it. This must be our excuse for stooping so low as to examine it.

His first charge is, that Mr. Hall now speaks of the French revolution in different language from that which he used in 1793. How many men have retained the same opinions on that subject? There may be some, and Mr. Benjamin Flower may be one; for there are men who have hearts too hard to be moved by crimes, or heads too stupid to be instructed by experience. The second accusation against Mr. Hall is, that he has imputed a great part of the horrors of the last ten years to the immoral, antisocial, and barbarizing spirit of atheism. Will this man deny, on principles of reason, that atheism has such a tendency? If he does, what becomes of his pretended zeal for religion? Or will he, on the authority of experience, deny that atheism has actually produced such effects? If he does, we refer him, not to Professor Robison, or the Abbé Barruel, of whose labours he, as might be expected, speaks with real rancour and affected contempt; but to the works of atheists and anarchists themselves, which he will think much better authority. Has he read the correspondence of Voltaire, of Diderot, of D'Alembert? Has he consulted any of the publications which have issued during the last ten years from the Paris press? Does he know that all the fanatical atheists of Europe (and England is not free from this pest) almost publicly boast that in thirty years no man in a civilized country will believe in God? Has he never heard that the miners of Cornwall were instigated to sell their clothes in order to purchase the impious ravings of Tom Paine; or that they were gratuitously distributed among the people of Scotland, with such fatal effect that a large body of that once religious people made a bonfire of their Bibles, in honour of the new apostle? Has he been informed that the London Corresponding Society (enlightened by the *Système de la Nature*, of which the translation was hawked in penny numbers at every stall in the metropolis) deliberated whether they ought not to uncitizen Tom Paine for superstitiously professing *some* belief in the existence of God? *Does he know that the same society resolved, that the belief of a God was so pernicious an opinion as to be an exception to the general principle of toleration?* Does he perceive the mischievous and infernal art with which only Deism is preached to the deluded peasantry of Scotland, while atheism is reserved for the more illuminated ruffians of London? *All this, and probably much more, we fear, he knows but too well!* Yet it is in the midst of these symptoms of a meditated revolt against all religion, and of bloody persecution practised wherever atheists are strong, and projected where they are weak, against the Christian worship, and all its ministers of all sects and persuasions, that this man has the

effrontery to make it a matter of accusation against Mr. Hall that he exhorted non-conformists, *not to abandon their dissent*, but merely to unite their efforts with those of the church, in resisting the progress of atheism. He, it seems, hates the church more than he loves religion. He has more zeal for dissent than for the belief of the existence of a Deity. His pious zeal would prefer slavery, under the disciples of *Condorcet* and *Volney*, to a temporary co-operation with the church which produced *Taylor* and *Barrow!* That such should be the sentiments of an obscure scribbler is a matter of small moment; though, notwithstanding his complaints of the state of the press, this is the first time since England was a nation that any man would have dared to publish them. But that such should be the sentiments of a numerous sect continuing to call themselves Christians would indeed be a matter of very serious consideration. But it cannot be. The body of dissenters will hasten to disavow such detestable sentiments. They will acknowledge as their representative, not this libeller, but the eloquent and philosophical preacher whom he has so foully slandered; whom no dissenting minister has surpassed in talents, and whom none has equalled or even nearly approached in taste and elegance of composition.

3. *From the Notes to Dr. Parr's Spital Sermon. Easter*, 1800.

After defending Mr. Hall from the censures of those who blamed him for styling Hooker "great and judicious," he proceeds thus:

In common with all men of letters, I read with exquisite delight Mr. Hall's sermon, lately published. As compositions, his former works are replete with excellence; but his last approaches to perfection, μετα του σεμνου την χαριν ἐχει. He apologizes for its length, but the apology was unnecessary; for every man of taste and virtue will apply to this publication what Photius said upon the λειμωναριον of Joannes Moschus, ἐξ ἁπαντων το χρησιμον ὁ συντετος και ὁ θεοφιλης ἀνηρ δρεπομενος, ουκ ἀν των συντεταγμενων κορον καταγνοιη. Bacon tells us that "the contemplative atheist is rare, and that atheism did never perturb states, because it makes men weary of themselves as looking no farther." But I agree with Mr. Hall, that "the present times furnish a melancholy exception to this general observation;" and Mr. Hall probably will agree with Bacon, "that superstition also has been the confusion of many states, and bringeth in a new primum mobile, that ravisheth all the spheres of government."—(Bacon's 17th and 18th Essays.) The liveliness of Mr. Hall's imagination and the strength of his feelings may now and then have led him to speak rather too strongly in each of his late publications. In the former [the Apology for the Freedom of the Press], I thought that he ascribed too much to the effects of popery under the French monarchy; and in the latter, too much to the effects of philosophy in the French revolution. But in both works he has made many wise and interesting observations; in both he has preserved a most beautiful and animated style; through both he has been actuated, I believe, by the purest motives; and by the last more especially, he has deserved well from every friend to civilized society and pure religion. I am not sure that Mr. Hall stands in need of any vindication upon the score of inconsistency; but I *am* sure that he is most able to vindicate himself against accusations really strong, if such there be, and I am equally sure that he has too much candour and too much magnanimity to persist in any error, which his own sagacity may discover, or the objections of his antagonists shall clearly prove.

Having stated my wishes, that in a few, I mean a very few, instances, Mr. Hall had been a little more wary in pushing his principles to consequences, which they may not quite warrant, I will give my general opinion of him in the words that were employed to describe a prelate, whose writings, I believe, are familiar to him, and whom he strongly resembles, not perhaps in variety of learning, but in fertility of imagination, in vigour of thinking, in rectitude of intention, and holiness of life. Yes, Mr. Hall, like Bishop Taylor, "has the eloquence of an orator, the fancy of a poet, the acuteness of a schoolman, the profoundness of a philosopher, and the piety of a saint."

Sincere as my attachment is to Protestantism, I confess that I have been pained by some outrageous invectives that have been lately thrown out against the Church

of Rome; and at the present crisis, I must further confess, that they appear to me not only unjust, but indiscreet, and even inhuman. Let me remind the accusers of Mr. Hall, that, in the estimation of Lord Bacon, "divisions in religion, if they be many, introduce atheism;" "that there is a superstition in avoiding superstition, when men think they do best by going farthest from what they think the superstition formerly received; and, therefore, care should be had that the good be not taken away with the bad, which commonly is done when the people is the reformer." Among those who censure Mr. Hall, there may be thoughtless and injudicious persons, who often repeat the witty and decisive answer of Sir Henry Wotton to the priest, who asked, "Where was your religion to be found before Luther?" Let me then recall to their memory the advice which Sir Henry gave to one whose earnestness exceeded his knowledge, and who was perpetually railing against the papists: "Pray, sir, forbear, till you have studied the points better; for the wise Italians have this proverb, '*He that understandeth amiss concludes worse;*' and take heed of thinking, the farther you go from the Church of Rome, the nearer you are to God." To men of sounder judgment and more candid dispositions I would recommend the serious perusal of "Cassandri Consultatio," of Grotius's notes upon it, and his three replies to Rivetus. When they read the "Syllabus Librorum et Epistolarum doctorum aliquot et priorum virorum," in the third volume of Grotius's works, they may cease to think Mr. Hall singular, when he remarks, in his preface, "How trivial, for the most part, are the controversies of Christians with each other!" They may be disposed to join him in his prayer, that "Ephraim may no longer vex Judah, or Judah Ephraim;" and they may be converted to the wise and salutary opinion of Grotius, "Quam non sit difficilis in Religione Conciliatio, si controvertendi studium vitetur!"

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## NOTE C.—[See page 56.]

### CHARACTER OF MR. HALL AS A PREACHER.

*From the London Magazine, No. XIV. Feb.* 1, 1821. *Written by the Editor, Mr. John Scott, Author of Visits to Paris, &c.*

Some of them (the dissenting ministers) are, at the present day, exhibiting no ordinary gifts and energies; and to the most distinguished of these we propose to direct the attention of our readers.

Mr. Hall, though perhaps the most distinguished ornament of the Calvinistic* dissenters, does not afford the best opportunity for criticism. His excellence does not consist in the predominance of one of his powers, but in the exquisite proportion and harmony of all. The richness, variety, and extent of his knowledge are not so remarkable as his absolute mastery over it. He moves about in the loftiest sphere of contemplation, as though he were "native and endued to its element." He uses the finest classical allusions, the noblest images, and the most exquisite words, as though they were those which came first to his mind, and which formed his natural dialect. There is not the least appearance of straining after greatness in his most magnificent excursions, but he rises to the loftiest heights with a childlike ease. His style is one of the clearest and simplest—the least encumbered with its own beauty—of any which ever has been written. It is bright and lucid as a mirror, and its most highly-wrought and sparkling embellishments are like ornaments of crystal, which, even in their brilliant inequalities of surface, give back to the eye little pieces of the true imagery set before them.

The works of this great preacher are, in the highest sense of the term, imaginative, as distinguished, not only from the didactic, but from the fanciful. He

* We use this epithet merely as that which will most distinctively characterise the extensive class to which it is applied, well aware that there are shades of difference among them, and the. many of them would decline to call themselves after any name but that of Christ.

possesses "the vision and faculty divine," in as high a degree as any of our writers in prose. His noblest passages do but make truth visible in the form of beauty, and "clothe upon" abstract ideas, till they become palpable in exquisite shapes. The dullest writer would not convey the same meaning in so few words as he has done in the most sublime of his illustrations. Imagination, when, like his, of the purest water, is so far from being improperly employed on divine subjects, that it only finds its real objects in the true and the eternal. This power it is which disdains the scattered elements of beauty, as they appear distinctly in an imperfect world, and strives by accumulation, and by rejecting the alloy cast on all things, to imbody to the mind that ideal beauty which shall be realized hereafter. This, by shedding a consecrating light on all it touches, and "bringing them into one," anticipates the future harmony of creation. This already sees the "soul of goodness in things evil," which shall one day change the evil into its likeness. This already begins the triumph over the separating powers of death and time, and renders their victory doubtful, by making us feel the immortality of the affections. Such is the faculty which is employed by Mr. Hall to its noblest uses. There is no rhetorical flourish, no mere pomp of words, in his most eloquent discourses. With vast excursive power, indeed, he can range through all the glories of the pagan world, and, seizing those traits of beauty which they derived from primeval revelation, restore them to the system of truth. But he is ever best when he is intensest—when he unvails the mighty foundations of the rock of ages—or makes the hearts of his hearers vibrate with a strange joy, which they will recognise in more exalted stages of their being.

Mr. Hall has unfortunately committed but few of his discourses to the press. His sermon on the tendencies of Modern Infidelity, is one of the noblest specimens of his genius. Nothing can be more fearfully sublime than the picture which he gives of the desolate state to which atheism would reduce the world; or more beautiful and triumphant than his vindication of the social affections. His Sermon On the Death of the Princess Charlotte contains a philosophical and eloquent development of the causes which make the sorrows of those who are encircled by the brightest appearances of happiness, peculiarly affecting; and gives an exquisite picture of the gentle victim adorned with sacrificial glories. His Discourses On War—On the Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Minister—and On the Work of the Holy Spirit—are of great and various excellence. But, as our limits will allow only a single extract, we prefer giving the close of a sermon preached in the prospect of the invasion of England by Napoleon, in which he blends the finest remembrance of the antique world—the dearest associations of British patriotism—and the pure spirit of the gospel—in a strain as noble as could be poured out by Tyrtæus.

[The passages quoted are from p. 106–111, vol. i.]

There is nothing very remarkable in Mr. Hall's manner of delivering his sermons. His simplicity, yet solemnity, of deportment engages the attention, but does not promise any of his most rapturous effusions. His voice is feeble but distinct, and as he proceeds trembles beneath his images, and conveys the idea that the spring of sublimity and beauty in his mind is exhaustless, and would pour forth a more copious stream, if it had a wider channel than can be supplied by the bodily organs. The plainest and least inspired of his discourses are not without delicate gleams of imagery, and felicitous turns of expression. He expatiates on the prophecies with a kindred spirit, and affords awful glimpses into the valley of vision. He often seems to conduct his hearers to the top of the "Delectable Mountains," whence they can see from afar the glorious gates of the eternal city. He seems at home among the marvellous revelations of St. John; and while he expatiates on them, leads his hearers breathless through ever-varying scenes of mystery, far more glorious and surprising than the wildest of oriental fables. He stops when they most desire that he should proceed—when he has just disclosed the dawnings of the inmost glory to their enraptured minds,—and leaves them full of imaginations of "things not made with hands"—of joys too ravishing for smiles—and of impulses which wing their hearts "along the line of limitless desires."

## NOTE D.—[See page 75.]

### AN EXTRACT OF A LETTER FROM DR. PRICHARD.

THE following extract of a letter, from Dr. Prichard to Dr. Frederick Thackeray, of Cambridge, describing concisely the results of the *post mortem* examination, unfolds the cause of Mr. Hall's acute suffering for so many years.

"We found the heart diseased in substance, and the muscular structure soft, and looking like macerated cellular membrane; the left ventricle was judged to be one-third larger than usual. The whole of the aorta was diseased; the internal membrane, in parts where it had not been in contact with blood, of a bright scarlet colour, which increased in deepness, and in the abdominal part of the artery was of a red purple hue. It contained in several places patches of bony matter about the size of a sixpence. This was the case particularly about the origin of the arteria innominata. The lungs were healthy. The kidney on the right side was *entirely filled* by a large, rough, pointed calculus. There was also an exostosis on the body of the fourth dorsal vertebra, about the third of an inch in height and prominent. This was too high to be the cause of the long-continued pain, which must have arisen from the renal calculus.

"The gall-bladder was quite full of calculi, though he had never experienced any symptoms referring to the liver or biliary secretion.

"Probably no man ever went through more physical suffering than Mr. Hall; he was a fine example of the triumph of the higher powers of mind exalted by religion, over the infirmities of the body. His loss will long be felt in this place, not only by persons of his own communion, but by all that have any esteem for what is truly great and good."

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## NOTE E.—[See page 75.]

### SKETCHES OF MR. HALL'S CHARACTER, ESPECIALLY AS MANIFESTED IN PRIVATE LIFE.*

MR. HALL seemed to me† very remarkable for being always in earnest. He was a perfect contrast to Socrates, who, as you will recollect, was called the ironist, from his constant assumption of a character that did not belong to him. Mr. Hall did not practise the Socratic irony. He never said one thing and meant another. He was earnest even in his wit and humour. It was never his design to impose on any person, and he was entirely free from suspicion. He was artless as a child. A sort of infantine simplicity was conspicuous in many parts of his conduct. With his extraordinary capacity, and a propension for abstract and refined thinking, it was curious and remarkable to observe the interest that he took in the present object. He threw himself entirely into whatever might be the topic of conversation, and seemed altogether engrossed with what pressed on the sense, and solicited immediate attention. It was perhaps owing to this interest in the present object, together with an undecaying vivacity of feeling, that he appeared to enjoy with the keenest relish whatever tended to innocent pleasure. Gratifications that usually give delight only in the earlier periods of life he enjoyed to the very last, as if he had not advanced beyond boyhood.

His powers of conversation were very extraordinary, and discovered quite as great abilities as appeared in his preaching or writings. He seemed equally capable of talking clearly, forcibly, copiously, beautifully, on every subject however common it might be, or however abstruse and remote from the course of general

* The great accordance in some striking particulars of these independent sketches of Mr. Hall gives them, in those respects, almost the air of tautology. But I venture to retain the whole, to show in how many essential points, every competent judge formed necessarily the same estimate.

† The Rev. William Anderson, classical tutor at the Baptist Education Society.

thought and conversation. He avoided, rather than invited, discourse on those subjects that might have been supposed to be most congenial with the cast and habit of his mind, and the current of his studies and speculations. He never *usurped* conversation, nor showed any disposition to give it any particular direction. He laid hold of casual topics of every kind, apparently to beguile the time, rather than as the occasions of imparting his knowledge, diffusing his wisdom, or turning them to any serious or practical purpose.

It was impossible to be often with Mr. Hall, and not be struck with the degree of nature that prevailed in all his words and actions, and in the whole of his bearing. Incidents, parts of conversations, that when separated from the circumstances in which they took place have an air of eccentricity and affectation, seemed perfectly natural as they occurred. All easily and spontaneously arose from the structure and usual operation of his mind, and the surrounding circumstances. There was no aim on his part to be singular, no effort to excite surprise, or catch admiration.

A very prominent quality of his mind seemed to be benevolence. He sympathized most deeply with all forms of distress, and endeavoured to afford relief, by suitable suggestions, by the exertions of his talents, and by pecuniary aid to the full extent of his means. It was easy to discern in him a great concern and anxiety to render those that were about him as comfortable as possible, and a visible delight in the pleasure of his friends. Akin to his great benevolence was an unusual sensibility to kindness. Little services, offices of respect and affection, small endeavours to promote his comfort, that would generally be considered as matters of course, even from those whose relation to him made the action a duty, would diffuse a gleam of benignity and satisfaction, and draw forth lively expressions of gratitude.

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Perhaps the character of Mr. Hall's mind* cannot be better described in a single word than by saying that it is perfectly balanced, and combines all the various powers in their highest perfection. If he possessed any one faculty in the same exuberance in which he possesses them all, and in respect to the others were not in the least distinguished, it would be enough to render him an extraordinary man. If he reasons, it is always with strict philosophical accuracy; with a keen, searching glance into the very mysteries of his subject, leaving the reader or hearer often at a loss whether most to admire the light, or the strength, or the depth of his argument; and generally leaving his antagonist to the alternative of quiet submission or of preparing for a still more mortifying defeat. If he comes into the region of taste or imagination, here also he is equally at home. With the same apparent ease that his mind can frame a powerful argument, it will pour forth images of exquisite beauty and tenderness, as well as of overwhelming majesty and strength. In short, there is no part of the intellectual world in which he does not seem to breathe freely, as if it were his peculiar element. He is at home as far below the surface of things, as far down in the depths of metaphysical abstraction, as perhaps any mind ever penetrates. He is at home amid the common-sense realities of life, judging of men and things with as much accuracy as if the whole business of his life had been to watch and analyze the operations of the human heart. He is at home in the field of fancy, in worlds of his own creation: and he can find in the mountain and in the valley, in the ocean and the sky, in the storm and the lightning, in every thing in the kingdom of nature and providence, a field where his imagination may expatiate with unlimited power. His acquisitions correspond, in a good degree, to his original endowments. It were not to be expected, indeed it were not possible, that he could have gone extensively into every department of science and learning, in which his great and versatile mind would have enabled him to become pre-eminent; we suppose his favourite studies to have been the science of morals and theology, though he has

* From the Rev. Dr. Sprague, of Albany, New-York, author of a most interesting and instructive volume on "Revivals of Religion" in America. This gentleman, when in England in 1828, spent some time at Bristol. The account from which I select the above passage was written before Mr Hall's death.

shown himself deeply versed in political economy, and the various branches of polite literature. His knowledge of the ancient and modern classics is extensive and exact; and if we mistake not, they make part of his every-day reading, even at this advanced period of life.

We remember to have been equally delighted and astonished at hearing him converse for an hour upon the philosophy of language, in a style which discovered a degree of reflection and research, from which one might have supposed that it was not only a favourite topic, but that he had made it the study of his life.

It were naturally to be expected, an intellect of such uncommon strength should be associated with a corresponding strength of feeling. This is true, in respect to Mr. Hall; and it is no doubt to the power of his feelings that the world is indebted for some of the most brilliant and useful of his efforts. A man of dull temperament, let his intellect be what it might, could never produce those fine strains of soul-stirring eloquence, in which it is the privilege of Mr. Hall to pour out even his common thoughts. But with all the strength of his feelings, his heart is full of kindness and affection. In all his intercourse he is noble and generous. His attachments are strong and enduring. He is open and honest in respect to every thing and everybody. As no one can approach him without a deep feeling of respect, so no one can be admitted to the hospitality of his fireside and the privilege of his friendship, without finding that the sentiment of respect is fast ripening into that of cordial and affectionate attachment.

In private conversation Mr. Hall is the admiration and delight of every circle in which he mingles He converses a great deal, partly because when his mind is excited it is not easy for him to be silent, and partly because there is so much in his conversation to interest and edify, that almost every one who is in his company regards it as a privilege to listen rather than talk, and acts accordingly. We have been struck with the fact, that, let the conversation turn upon whatever subject it may, even though it be a subject on which he might be expected to be least at home, he is equally ready, equally eloquent. He possesses, beyond any man we have known, the faculty of bringing facts and principles which are stored up in his mind instantly to bear upon any given subject; throwing around it at once, to the mind of the hearer, the clear strong light in which it appears to his own. This must be owing partly to the original power which he possesses of discerning almost intuitively even the most remote relations of things to each other, and partly to the perfect order with which all his intellectual acquisitions are arranged. In the midst of an involved discussion, he will bring to his aid insulated facts from the various departments of knowledge, without the least hesitation or effort, just as we have known some men who had a remarkable attachment to order, able to enter their library, and lay their hand on any book at pleasure in the dark. But, notwithstanding he converses so much, there is not the semblance of an obtrusive or ostentatious manner,—nothing that seems to say that he is thinking of his own superiority; on the contrary, he seems to forget, and sometimes makes those around him forget, the greatness of the man, in the greatness which he throws around his subject. He has a strong passion for sarcasm, which often comes out in his conversation, and sometimes with prodigious effect. He is, however, by no means severe in the common estimate which he forms of character; so far from it, that he treats characters for the most part with unusual lenity, and sometimes seems delighted with exhibitions of intellect from others, which would have appeared to every one else far below the most common place efforts of his own mind.

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In his converse, as well as in his ministrations, no one could avoid being struck by a certain naturalness and simplicity peculiar to himself, and rendered the more remarkable and engaging by its union with such consummate intelligence and eloquence.* His companion or hearer was alike surprised and charmed by the harmonious contrast of excellences, so dissimilar, yet in him so perfectly combined.

In all that he uttered, whether in social or sacred discourse, there was a vivid

* Communicated by the Rev. Thomas Grinfield, A.M., of Clifton.

freshness and raciness of thought and expression that marked it as the growth of his own mind, and gave an interest to his familiar remarks, as well as to the more elaborate productions of his mighty genius. Possessed of art and refinement in the highest degree, he had the rare and strange felicity of retaining unimpaired the charm of native beauty.

Among the predominant qualities of his nature, one of the most obvious was his openness, his ingenuous unreserve, his social communicativeness. Conversation was not less his congenial element than contemplation. He evidently delighted to disclose and impart the accumulated stores of his mind; while he seemed to luxuriate in that unequalled fluency of graceful or energetic language with which he was gifted. The warmth of his affections was proportioned to the strength of his intellect. His own mental opulence did not make him independent on the converse and friendship of those who were poor in comparison with himself. He felt, in the language of Cicero, and as he has elegantly portrayed his feelings in the sermon on the death of Dr. Ryland, that, "Caritate et benevolentia sublata, omnis est è vita sublata jucunditas."

The benevolence of his capacious heart greatly contributed at once to inspire and increase his love of society and conversation; while, in the social circle, and in the solemn assembly, he appeared as a distinguished representative, a most expressive organ of our nature, in all its more familiar sentiments, or in all its more sublime conceptions and aspirations. Hence he was regarded by the multitudes who sought his public or his private presence as a kind of universal property, whom all parties had a right to enjoy, and none to monopolize: before him, all forgot their denominations, as he appeared to forget his own, in the comprehensive idea of the church of Christ.

In recollecting the moral features of his character, it is impossible to forget the consummate truth and sincerity which left its unequivocal stamp on all he said, of which a suspicion never occurred to any one, and which gave to his discourses a solidity and an impressiveness, which otherwise their argument and eloquence could never have commanded. Never has there been a stronger, a more universal confidence in the sacred orator, as one whose eloquence was kindled in his own heart; never were the testimony of faith, and the rapture of hope, exhibited in a more manifestly genuine, unaffected, and consequently in a more convincing form. His was truly the "generoso incoctum pectus Honesto." This added to his ministry a singular and inestimable charm. Hence, more than any other advocate of evangelical principles, he was revered, even by the irreligious. His peculiar ascendency over such was not acquired by any degree of compromise in his exhibition of spiritual religion; it was the involuntary result of their conviction that his earnestness was as perfect as his eloquence. Never can there have been a preacher more strikingly characterized by a dignified simplicity, a majesty unalloyed by pomp: never was there a finer combination of the utmost manliness and grandeur with the utmost delicacy and pathos. No wonder that such qualities, combined in such perfection, should have produced so strong and so extensive an enchantment.

It must be acknowledged that the moral graces of his character derived a peculiar and accidental advantage from the intellectual power and splendour with which they were united; a remark particularly applicable to that child-like simplicity by which he was distinguished, and to that delicate and refined modesty which was the natural indication of an interior and inwrought humility. "Be clothed with humility," was the subject of his last lecture preparatory to the communion, the last entire address which I heard from his lips (Jan. 1831); and, as I returned in company with some members of the Church of England, who privileged themselves with hearing him on these monthly opportunities, we were all impressed by the force which his pathetic exhortation acquired from his own conspicuous example of the grace he had recommended. His humility gave a charm to his character, and to his preaching, which all his more brilliant qualities, without it, could not have supplied; while it served as a dark background, from which their brilliant contrast rose the more impressive and sublime.

In thus slightly glancing at some of the more retired graces with which he was adorned, I cannot dismiss the hasty and unfinished sketch without referring to

that sweet sunshine of serenity, cheerfulness, and bland good-nature which, unobscured by so much acute or wearing pain, habitually beamed in his noble aspect, and diffused its genial influence alike over his converse and his preaching. A friend, subject to constitutional depression of spirits, assured me that, on several occasions, he has found his sadness soothed by the balm of a visit or a sermon, for which he had resorted to Mr. Hall. Nothing morose, nothing gloomy, either in his natural temper or in his religious views, impaired the fascination of his presence, or the benefit of his ministry.

The remembrance of such a man, especially as it is now embalmed and sanctified by death (and his death was altogether in harmony with his character), cannot leave any other than a beneficial influence, ennobling and elevating to the mind and the heart. The name of "Robert Hall" is rich in sacred as well as splendid associations; a memento of consecrated intellect and energy; an inspiring watchword for the cultivation of Christian graces and of heavenly affections; an antidote to all that is unworthy in principle or practice; an attraction to whatever, in the intellectual or moral system, bears the stamp of unaffected excellence; whatever qualifies for the fruition of spiritual and eternal blessings; whatever is allied to the love of CHRIST and GOD

# OBSERVATIONS

ON

# MR. HALL'S CHARACTER AS A PREACHER.

## BY JOHN FOSTER.

THE biographical and literary illustrations of Mr. Hall's character and performances expected from the highly qualified editor of his works, and from the eminent person who has engaged for a part of that tribute to his memory,* may render any formal attempt in addition liable to be regarded as both superfluous and intrusive; the public, besides, have been extensively and very long in possession of their own means of forming that judgment which has pronounced him the first preacher of the age: and again, so soon after the removal of such a man, while the sentiments of friendship and admiration are finding their natural expression in the language of unrestrained eulogy, it is hardly permitted to assume a judicial impartiality. From these considerations it has been with very great reluctance that I have consented, in compliance with the wishes of some of Mr. Hall's friends, to attempt a short description of what he was in the special capacity of a preacher; a subject which must indeed be of chief account in *any* memorial of him; but may also admit of being taken in some degree separately from the general view of his life, character, and writings.

For more reasons than that it must be one cause, added to others, of an imperfect competence to describe him in that capacity, I have to regret the disadvantage of not having been, more than very occasionally, perhaps hardly ten times in all, a hearer of Mr. Hall till within the last few years of his life. It appears to be the opinion of all those attendants on his late ministrations, who had also been his hearers in former times (and from recollection of the few sermons which I heard many years since my own impression would be the same), that advancing age, together with the severe and almost continual pressure of pain, had produced a sensible effect on his preaching, perceptible in an abatement of the energy and splendour of his eloquence. He was less apt to be excited to that intense ardour of emotion and utterance which so often, animating to the extreme emphasis a train of sentiments impressive by their intrinsic force, had held dominion over every faculty of thought and feeling in a large assembly. It is not meant, however,

* These observations were written, and transmitted to the publishers, a considerable time before the lamented and unexpected decease of Sir J. Mackintosh. A very few slight notes have been added in the last revisal for the press.

that a considerable degree of this ancient fire did not frequently appear glowing and shining again. Within the course of a moderate number of sermons there would be one or more which brought back the preacher of the times long past to the view of those who had heard him in those times.

I have reason to believe that this representation of his diminished energy should be nearly limited to a very late period, the period when an increased but reluctant use of opiates became absolutely necessary, to enable him to endure the pain which he had suffered throughout his life, and when another obscure malady was gradually working towards a fatal termination. For at a time not more than seven or eight years since, I heard in close succession several sermons delivered in so ardent an excitement of sentiment and manner as I could not conceive it possible for himself or any other orator to have surpassed. Even so lately as within the last four or five years of his life, the recurrence of something approaching to this was not so infrequent as to leave any apprehension that it might not soon be displayed again.

There was some compensation for the abatement of this character of force and vehemence, supplied by a certain tone of kindness, a milder pathos, more sensibly expressive of benevolence towards his hearers, than the impetuous, the almost imperious energy so often predominant when an undepressed vitality of the physical system was auxiliary to the utmost excitement of his mind.

There seems to be a perfect agreement of opinion that a considerable decline of the power or the activity of his *imagination* was evident in the latter part of his life. The felicities of figure and allusion of all kinds, sometimes illustrative by close analogy, often gay and humorous, sometimes splendid, less abounded in his conversation. And in his public discourses there appeared to be a much rarer occurrence of those striking images in which a series of thoughts seemed to take fire in passing on, to end in a still more striking figure, with the effect of an explosion. So that, from persons who would occasionally go to hear him with much the same taste and notions as they would carry to a theatrical or mere oratorical exhibition, and caring little about religious truth and instruction, there might be heard complaints of disappointment, expressed in terms of more than hinted depreciation. They had hardly any other idea of eloquence, even that of the pulpit, than that it must be *brilliant;* and they certainly might happen to hear (at the late period in question) several of his sermons which had not more than a very moderate share of this attraction. But even such persons, if disposed to attend his preaching regularly for a few weeks, might have been sure to hear some sermons in which the solidity of thought was finely inspirited with the sparkling quality they were requiring.

But whatever reduction his imagination may have suffered from age and the oppression of disease and pain, it is on all hands admitted that there was no decline in what he valued far more in both himself and others, and what all, except very young or defectively cultivated persons and inferior poets, must regard as the highest of mental endowments—the intellectual power. His wonderful ability for comprehending and reasoning, his quickness of apprehension, his faculty for analyzing a subject to its elements, for seizing on the essential points, for going back to principles and forward to consequences, and for bringing out into an intelligible and sometimes very obvious form what appeared obscure or perplexed, remained unaltered to the last. This noble intellect, thus seen with a diminished lustre of imagination, suggested the idea of a lofty eminence raising its form and summit

clear and bare towards the sky, losing nothing of its imposing aspect by absence of the wreaths of tinctured clouds, which may have invested it at another season.

It is to be observed, that imagination had always been a subordinate faculty in his mental constitution. It was never of that prolific power which threw so vast a profusion over the oratory of Jeremy Taylor or of Burke; or which could tempt him to revel, for the pure luxury of the indulgence, as they appear to have sometimes done, in the exuberance of imaginative genius.

As a preacher, none of those contemporaries who have not seen him in the pulpit, or of his readers in another age, will be able to conceive an adequate idea of Mr. Hall. His personal appearance was in striking conformity to the structure and temper of his mind. A large-built, robust figure was in perfect keeping with a countenance formed as if on purpose for the most declared manifestation of internal power, a power impregnable in its own strength, as in a fortress, and constantly, without an effort, in a state for action.* That countenance was usually of a cool, unmoved mien at the beginning of the public service; and sometimes, when he was not greatly excited by his subject, or was repressed by pain, would not acquire a great degree of temporary expression during the whole discourse. At other times it would kindle into an ardent aspect as he went on, and towards the conclusion become lighted up almost into a glare. But, for myself, I doubt whether I was not quite as much arrested by his appearance in the interval while a short part of the service, performed without his assistance, immediately before the sermon, allowed him to sit in silence. With his eyes closed, his features as still as in death, and his head sinking down almost on his chest, he presented an image of entire abstraction. For a moment, perhaps, he would seem to awake to a perception of the scene before him, but instantly relapse into the same state. It was interesting to imagine the strong internal agency which it was certain was then employed on the yet unknown subject about to be unfolded to the auditory.

His manner of public prayer, considered as an exercise of thought, was not exactly what would have been expected from a mind constituted like his. A manner so different in that exercise from its operation in all other employments could hardly have been unintentional; but on what principle it was preferred cannot be known or conjectured. It is to the *intellectual* consistence and order of his thoughts in public prayer that I am adverting, in uncertainty how far the opinion of others may have been the same; as to the *devotional* spirit, there could be but one impression. There was the greatest seriousness and simplicity, the plainest character of genuine piety, humble and prostrate before the Almighty. Both solemnity and good taste forbade indulgence in any thing showy or elaborately ingenious in such an employment. But there might have been, without an approach to any such impropriety, and as it always appeared to me, with great advantage, what I may venture to call a more *thinking* performance of the exercise; a series of ideas more reflectively conceived, and more connected and classed, if I may express it so, in their order. Many of the conceptions were not, individually, presented in that specific expression which conveys one certain thing to the appre-

* The portrait to accompany the Works, highly elaborated, and true to the general form and lineaments, fails to give exactly that stern, intense, and somewhat formidable *expression*, which the painter, Mr. Branwhite, was very successful in seizing, in spite of circumstances the most unfavourable for obtaining a likeness. Mr. Hall had an insuperable aversion to sit for his portrait.

hension; nor were there, generally speaking, those *trains* of petitionary thought, which would strongly fix, and for a while detain, the attention on each distinctly, in the succession of the subjects of devotional interest.

No one, I may presume, will be so mistaken as to imagine that *pieces of discussion*, formal developments of doctrines, nice casuistical distinctions, like sections of a theological essay, are meant in pleading that it must be of great advantage for engaging attention, exciting interest, and inducing reflection, that instead of a rapidly discursive succession of ideas, the leader of the devotions should often dwell awhile on one and another important topic, and with a number of accumulated sentiments specifically appropriate to each; in order that its importance, thus exposed and aggravated, may constrain the auditory to reflect how deeply they are concerned in that one subject of petition. Any one pernicious thing deprecated—a spiritual evil, a vice of the heart or life, an easily besetting temptation, a perilous delusion into which men are liable to fall, or a temporal calamity,—and so, on the other hand, any one of the good gifts implored,—might thus be exposed in magnified and palpable importance before the minds of the people.

Will it be objected that this would tend to a practice not consistent either with the comprehensiveness of religion, or with the generality of scope requisite to adapt the prayer to the aggregate interests of a very mixed assemblage; that it would be to confine the attention to a few selected particulars of religion, losing the view of its wide compass; and to reduce the prayer which should be for all the people collectively regarded, to a set of adaptations to certain supposed individual cases, or small classes, singled out in the congregation, to the exclusion, in effect, of the general body? I may answer that, in perfect safety from shrinking into such speciality and exclusiveness, the great element of religion may be resolved into particular subjects and adaptations in public prayer. Particular parts of divine truth may come in view as suggesting matter of distinct and somewhat prolonged petition, conceived in terms that shall constantly and closely recognise the condition of the people. A man well exercised in religion, and well acquainted with the states and characters of men, might recount to himself a greater number of such topics than the longest book in the Bible comprises chapters; and would see that each of them might beneficially be somewhat amplified by thoughts naturally arising upon it; that one of them would be peculiarly appropriate to one portion of the assembly, another of them adapted to several conditions, and some of them commensurate with the interests of all. In one prayer of moderate length he might comprehend a number of these distinguishable topics, thus severally kept in view for a few moments; and varying them from time to time, he might bring the concerns which are the business of prayer, in *parts*, and with special effects, before the minds of the people, instead of giving the course of his thoughts every time to the guidance of entirely accidental and miscellaneous suggestion. I might ask, why should *sermons* be constructed to fix the attention of a mixed congregation on distinct parts of religion, instead of being, each in succession, vaguely discursive over the whole field? I would not say that the two exercises are under exactly the same laws; but still, is there a propriety, that in a discourse for religious instruction some selected topics should stand forth in marked designation, to work one certain effect on the understanding or the feelings, and no propriety that any corresponding principle should be observed in those prayers which

may be supposed to request, and with much more than a passing momentary interest, such things as that instruction would indicate as most important to be obtained!

But besides all this, there is no hazard in affirming that prayers which do not detain the thoughts on any certain things in particular take very slight hold of the auditors. Things noted so transiently do not admit of a deliberate attention, and seem as if they did not claim it; the assembly are not made conscious how much they want what is petitioned for; and at the close would be at a loss to recollect any one part as having awakened a strong consciousness that *that* is what they have *themselves* in a special manner to pray for when alone.

Such observations are, under small limitation, applicable to Mr. Hall's public prayer. The succession of sentences appeared almost casual, or in a connexion too slight to hold the hearer's mind distinctly, for a time, to a certain object. A very large proportion of the series consisted of texts of Scripture; and as many of these were figurative, often requiring, in order to apprehend their plain sense, an act of thought for which there was not time, the mind was led on with a very defective conception of the exact import of much of the phraseology. He did not avail himself of the portion of Scripture he had just read as a guiding suggestion of subjects for the prayer; and very seldom made it bear any particular relation to what was to follow as the subject of the discourse.

One could wish that, with the exception of very peculiar cases, *personalities*, when they must be introduced, should be as brief as possible in public prayer; especially such as point to individuals who are present, and whose own feelings, one should think, would earnestly deprecate their being made conspicuous objects of the prolonged attention of the congregation. Mr. Hall's consideration for individuals standing officially, or brought incidentally, in association with an assembly, often led him to a length and particularity in personal references which one could not help regretting, as an encroachment on the time and the more proper concerns of the exercise, and as a sanction lent by an example of such high authority to a practice which leads the thoughts quite away from the interests in common; tempting the auditors into an impertinence of imagination about the persons so placed in exhibition, their characters, domestic circumstances, and so forth; with possibly a silent criticism, not much in harmony with devotion, on some flaw of consistency between the terms which the speaker is now employing, and those which he may be heard, or may have been heard, to use in other times and places respecting the same individuals. In the laudatory tone and epithets into which he inevitably glides (for he never adverts to any *faults* of the persons thus prominently held in view, with prayer for their correction), it is hardly possible for him, while the matter is kept long under operation, to avoid changing its colour, from that of reverence towards God into that of compliment to a fellow-mortal and fellow-sinner.

If there was a defect of concentration, an indeterminateness in the direction of thought, in Mr. Hall's public prayers, the reverse was conspicuous in his preaching. He surpassed perhaps all preachers of recent times in the capital excellence of having a definite purpose, a distinct assignable subject, in each sermon. Sometimes, indeed, as when intruders had robbed him of all his time for study, or when his spirits had been consumed by a prolonged excess of pain, he was reduced to take the license of discoursing with less definite scope, on the common subjects of religion. But he was never pleased with any

scheme of a sermon in which he could not, at the outset, say exactly what it was he meant to do. He told his friends that he always felt "he could do nothing with" a text or subject till it resolved and shaped itself into a topic of which he could see the form and outline, and which he could take out both from the extensive system of religious truth, and, substantially, from its connexion with the more immediately related parts of that system; at the same time not failing to indicate that connexion, by a few brief clear remarks to show the consistency and mutual corroboration of the portions thus taken apart for separate discussion. This method ensured to him and his hearers the advantage of an ample variety. Some of them remember instances in which he preached, with but a short interval, two sermons on what would have appeared to common apprehension but *one* subject, a very limited section of doctrine or duty; yet the sermons went on quite different tracks of thoughts, presenting separate views of the subject, related to each other only by a general consistency. His survey of the extended field of religion was in the manner of a topographer, who fixes for a while on one separate district, and then on another, finding in each, though it were of very confined dimensions, many curious matters of research, and many interesting objects; while yet he shall possess the wide information which keeps the country at large so comprehensively within his view, that he can notice and illustrate, as he proceeds, all the characters of the relation of the parts to one another and to the whole.

The preacher uniformly began his sermons in a low voice, and with sentences of the utmost plainness both of thought and language. It was not, I believe, in observance of any precept of the rhetoricians, or with any conscious intention, that he did so; it was simply the manner in which his mind naturally set in for the consideration of an important subject. This perfect plainness of the introduction, quietly delivered in a voice deficient in tone and force, and difficult to be heard at first by a large part of the congregation, occasioned surprise and disappointment sometimes to strangers drawn by curiosity to hear "the celebrated orator," in the expectation, perhaps, of powerful sallies, flourishes, and fulminations. "Can this be he?" has been the question whispered between some two such expectants, seated together. A short comment on the facts in Scripture history found in connexion with the text, or which had been the occasion of the words; or on circumstances in the condition of the primitive church; or on some ancient or modern error relating to the subject to be proposed; would give, within the space of five or ten minutes, the condensed and perspicuous result of much reading and study. Sometimes he would go immediately to his subject, after a very few introductory sentences. And the attentive hearer was certain to apprehend what that subject was. It was stated precisely, yet in so simple a manner as to preclude all appearance of elaborate definition.

The distribution was always perfectly inartificial, cast in an order of the least formality of division that could mark an intelligible succession of parts, very seldom exceeding the number of three or four; which set forth the elements of the subject in the merest natural form, if I may express it so, of their subsistence. Generally, each of these parts was illustrated in two or three particulars, noted as first, second, and perhaps third. He never attempted, never thought of those schemes of arrangement in which parts are ingeniously placed in antithesis, or in such other disposition as to reflect cross-lights on one another, producing surprise and curious expectation, with a passing glance of thought at the dexterity of the preacher who can work them in their contrasted

positions to one ultimate effect. It is not denied that such ingenious and somewhat quaint devices of arrangement have had their advantage, in the hands of men who made them the vehicles of serious and important sentiment, really desirous, not to amuse, but to attract and instruct. They catch attention, make the progress and stages of the discourse more sensible by the transitions between points apparently so abruptly asunder, and leave more durable traces in the memory than, it was often complained, could be preserved of Mr. Hall's sermons. But such a mode was entirely foreign to the constitution and action of his mind. He never came on his subject by any thing like manœuvre; never approached it *sideways*; never sought to secure himself resources in particular parts, corners, and adjuncts, against the effects of a failure in the main substance; never threw out the force of a subject in offsets; never expended it in dispersed varieties. He had it in one full single view before him, the parts lying in natural contiguity as a whole; and advanced straight forward in pursuance of a plain leading principle; looking to the right and the left just so far as to preserve the due breadth of the illustration.

This is meant as a description generally applicable to the earlier and middle portions of the discourse, which were often, as regarded in a purely intellectual view, much the most valuable.* It was highly interesting, even as a mere affair of reason, independently of the religious object, to accompany this part of his progress; from the announcement of his subject (sometimes in the form of a general proposition founded on the text, oftener in a more free exposition), onward through a series of statements, illustrations, and distinctions, till an important doctrine became unfolded to view, full in its explication, and strong in its evidence. In this progress, he would take account of any objections which he deemed it of consequence to obviate, meeting them without evasion, with acuteness and exact knowledge, available to the point. Every mode and resource of argument was at his command; but he was singularly successful in that which is technically denominated *reductio ad absurdum*. Many a specious notion and cavil was convicted of being not only erroneous, but foolish.

He displayed, in a most eminent degree, the rare excellence of a perfect conception and expression of every thought, however rapid the succession. There were no half-formed ideas, no misty semblances of a meaning, no momentary lapses of intellect into an utterance at hazard, no sentences without a distinct object, and serving merely for the continuity of speaking; every sentiment had at once a palpable shape, and an appropriateness to the immediate purpose. If now and then, which was seldom, a word, or a part of a sentence, slightly failed to denote precisely the thing he intended, it was curious to observe how perfectly he was aware of it, and how he would instantly throw in an additional clause, which did signify it precisely. Another thing for curious observation was, that sometimes, in the middle of a sentence, or just as it came to an end, there would suddenly occur to him some required point of discrimination, some exception perhaps, or limitation, to the assertion he was in the act of making; or at another time, a circumstance of rein-

* There was a remission of strict connexion of thought towards the conclusion, where he threw himself loose into a strain of declamation, always earnest, and often fervid. This was of great effect in securing a degree of favour with many, to whom so intellectual a preacher would not otherwise have been acceptable; it was this that reconciled persons of simple piety and little cultivated understanding. Many who might follow him with very imperfect apprehension and satisfaction through the preceding parts, could reckon on being warmly interested at the latter end. In that part his utterance acquired a remarkable change of intonation, expressive of his own excited feelings.

forcement extraneously suggested, a transient ray, as it were, from a foreign and distant object; and then he would, at the prompting of the moment, intimate the qualifying reference in a brief parenthesis in the sentence, or by a reverting glance at the end of it.—In these last lines of the description, I have in view the more closely intellectual parts of his public exercises, the parts employed in the ascertainment of elucidation of truth. There will be occasion, towards the close or these notices, to attribute some defect of discrimination and caution to other parts or qualities of his sermons.

It were superfluous to say, that Mr. Hall's powerful reasoning faculty, and his love and habit of reasoning, went into his preaching but I may be allowed to observe, that the argumentative tenor thence prevailing through it, was of a somewhat different modification from the reasoning process exhibited in the composition of some of the most distinguished sermon-writers. To say that he had much, very much of the essence and effect of reasoning without its forms will perhaps be considered as unqualified praise. Certainly we have a good riddance in the obsoleteness of the cumbrous and barbarous technicalities of logic, in use among schoolmen, and of which traces remain in the works of some of our old divines, especially of the polemic class. But, divested of every sort of technicality, a natural and easy logic (easy, I mean, for the hearers' or readers' apprehension) may pervade a discourse in such manner that it shall evidently have more of the consistence of a contexture than of an accumulation. The train of thinking may preserve a link of connexion by the dependence of the following thought on the foregoing; that succeeding thought not only being just in itself, and pertinent to the matter in hand, but being so still more specially in virtue of resulting, by obvious deduction, or necessary continuation, from the preceding; thus at once giving and receiving force by the connexion. It is of great advantage for the strength of a discourse, when it is so conceived as to require the not unfrequent recurrence of the signs, "for," "because," "if, then," "consequently," "so that," and the other familiar logical marks of conjunction and dependence in the series of ideas.

This will not be mistaken to mean any thing like a long uninterrupted process, as in a mathematical demonstration carried on in a rigorous strictness of method, and with a dependence of the validity of some one final result on the correctness of each and every movement in the long operation. No lengthened courses of deduction are required or admissible in popular instruction; the discourse must, at no distant intervals, come to pauses and changes, introducing matters of argument and illustration which are chosen by the preacher for their general pertinence and effectiveness to the subject, rather than by any strict logical rule of continuity; and he is not required to answer a captious question of a disciple of the schools whether this topic, and this again, be in the most exact line of sequence with the foregoing. It is sufficient that there be an obvious *general* relation, connecting the successive portions of the discourse; so that each in the succession shall take along with it the substantial effect of the preceding. But through the extent of each of these portions, the course of thinking might be conducted in a certain order of consecutive dependence, which should make the thoughts not merely to coincide, but to verify and authenticate one another while they coincide in bearing on the proposed object. And such a mode of working them into evidence and application would give them a closer grapple on the mind.

There will be testimony to this from the experience of readers conversant with the best examples; for instance, the sermons of South, which, glaringly censurable as many of them are on very grave accounts, are admirable for this linked succession, this passing to a further idea by *consequence* from the preceding, and not merely by that principle of relation between them, that they both tend to the same effect. Yet, at the same time, so far is he from exhibiting a cold dry argument, like Clarke in his sermons, that his ratiocination is abundantly charged with what may be called the matter of passion; often indeed malicious and fierce, sometimes solemnly impressive; at all events serving to show that strong argument may be worked in fire as well as in frost.* It has always appeared to me, that Mr. Hall's discourses would have had one more ingredient of excellence, if the rich and strong production of thought, while pressing, as it always did, with a united impulse towards the point in view, had been drawn out in a sequence of more express and palpable dependence and concatenation. The conjunction of the ideas would sometimes appear to be rather that of contiguity than of implication. The successive sentences would come like separate independent dictates of intellect, the absence of some of which would indeed have been a loss to the general force, but not a breach of connexion. It must be observed, however, that when special occasions required it, he would bring into exercise the most severe logic in the most explicit form. Many fine examples of this are found in his controversy on Terms of Communion. And such would, at times, occur in his sermons.

Every cultivated hearer must have been struck with admiration of the preacher's mastery of language,—a refractory servant to many who have made no small efforts to command it. I know not whether he sometimes painfully felt its deficiency and untowardness for his purpose; but it *seemed* to answer all his requirements, whether for cutting nice discriminations, or presenting abstractions in a tangible form, or investing grand subjects with splendour, or imparting a pathetic tone to expostulation, or inflaming the force of invective, or treating common topics without the insipidity of commonplace diction. His language in the pulpit was hardly ever colloquial, but neither was it of an artificial cast. It was generally as little *bookish* as might consist with a uniformly sustained and serious style. Now and then there would be a scholastic term, beyond the popular understanding, so familiar to himself, from his study of philosophers and old divines, as to be the first word occurring to him in his rapid delivery. Some conventional phrases which he was in the habit of using (for instance, "to usher in," "to give birth to," &c.) might better have been exchanged for plain unfigurative verbs. His language in preaching, as in conversation, was in one considerable point better than in his well-known and elaborately composed sermons, in being more natural and flexible. When he set in reluctantly upon that operose employment, his style was apt to assume a certain processional stateliness of march, a rhetorical rounding of periods, a too frequent inversion of the natural order of the sentence, with a morbid dread of degrading it to end in a particle or other small-looking word; a structure in which I doubt whether the augmented appearance of strength and dignity be a compensation for the sacrifice of a natural, living, and variable freedom of composition. A remarkable difference will be perceived between the highly-

* Among others, I might name Stillingfleet's sermons, as exemplifying this manner of connexion in the series of ideas. If reference were made to ancient eloquence, Demosthenes would be cited as the transcendent example of this excellence.

wrought sermons long since published, and the short ones now printed, which were written without a thought of the press; a difference to the advantage of the latter in the grace of simplicity. Both in his conversation and his public speaking, there was often, besides and beyond the merit of clearness, precision, and brevity, a certain felicity of diction; something which, had it not been common in his discourse, would have appeared the special *good luck* of falling without care of selection on the aptest words, cast in elegant combination, and producing an effect of beauty even when there was nothing expressly ornamental.

From the pleasure there is in causing and feeling surprise by the exaggeration of what *is* extraordinary into something absolutely marvellous, persons of Mr. Hall's acquaintance, especially in his earlier life, have taken great license of fiction in stories of his extemporaneous eloquence. It was not uncommon to have an admired sermon asserted to have been thrown off in an emergency on the strength of an hour's previous study. This matter has been set right in Dr. Gregory's curious and interesting note (prefixed to vol. i.) describing the preacher's usual manner of preparation; and showing that it was generally made with deliberate care.* But whatever proportion of the discourse was from premeditation, the hearer could not distinguish that from what was extemporaneous. There were no periods betraying, by a mechanical utterance, a mere recitation. Every sentence had so much the spirit and significance of present immediate thinking, as to prove it a living dictate of the speaker's mind, whether it came in the way of recollection or in the fresh production of the moment. And in most of his sermons, the more animated ones especially, a very large proportion of what he spoke must have been of this immediate origination; it was impossible that less than this should be the effect of the excited state of a mind so powerful in thinking, so extremely prompt in the use of that power, and in possession of such copious materials.

Some of his discourses were of a calm temperament nearly throughout; even these, however, never failing to end with a pressing enforcement of the subject. But in a considerable portion of them (a large one, it is said, during all but a late period of his life) he warmed into emotion before he had advanced through what might be called the discussion. The intellectual process, the explications, arguments, and exemplifications, would then be animated, without being confused, obscured, or too much dilated by that more vital element which we denominate sentiment; while striking figures, at intervals, emitted a momentary brightness; so that the understanding, the passions, and the imagination of the hearers were all at once brought under command, by a combination of the forces adapted to seize possession of each The spirit of such discourses would grow into intense fervour, even before they approached the conclusion.

In the most admired of his sermons, and invariably in all his preaching, there was one excellence, of a moral kind, in which few eloquent preachers have ever equalled, and none ever did or will surpass him. It was so remarkable and obvious, that the reader (if having been also a hearer of Mr. Hall) will have gone before me when I name—oblivion of self. The preacher appeared wholly absorbed in his subject, given

* Once, in a conversation with a few friends who had led him to talk of his preaching, and to answer, among other questions, one respecting this supposed and reported extemporaneous production of the most striking parts of his sermons in the early period of his ministry, he surprised us by saying, that most of them, so far from being extemporaneous, had been so deliberately prepared that the words were selected, and the construction and order of the sentences adjusted.

up to its possession, as the single actuating principle and impulse of the mental achievement which he was as if unconsciously performing: *a if* unconsciously; for it is impossible it could be literally so; yet his absorption was so evident, there was so clear an absence of every betraying sign of vanity, as to leave no doubt that reflection on himself, the tacit thought, 'It is I that am displaying this excellence of speech,' was the faintest action of his mind. His auditory were sure that it was as in relation to his subject, and not to himself. that he regarded the feelings with which they might hear him.

What a contrast to divers showy and admired orators, whom the reader will remember to have seen in the pulpit and elsewhere! For who has not witnessed, perhaps more times than a few, a pulpit exhibition, which unwittingly told that the speaker was to be himself as prominent, at the least, as his sacred theme? Who has not observed the glimmer of a self-complacent smile, partly reflected, as it were, on his visage, from the plausive visages confronting him, and partly lighted from within, by the blandishment of a still warmer admirer? Who has not seen him swelling with a tone and air of conscious importance in some specially *fine* passage; prolonging it, holding it up, spreading out another and yet another scarlet fold, with at last a temporary stop to survey the assembly, as challenging their tributary looks of admiration, radiating on himself, or interchanged among sympathetic individuals in the congregation? Such a preacher might have done well to become a hearer for a while; if indeed capable of receiving any corrective instruction from an example of his reverse; for there have been instances of preachers actually spoiling themselves still worse in consequence of hearing some of Mr. Hall's eloquent effusions; assuming, beyond their previous sufficiency of such graces, a vociferous declamation, a forced look of force, and a tumour of verbiage, from unaccountable failure to perceive, or to make a right use of the perception, that his sometimes impetuous delivery, ardent aspect, and occasionally magnificent diction were all purely spontaneous from the strong excitement of the subject.

Under that excitement, when it was the greatest, he did unconsciously acquire a corresponding elation of attitude and expression; would turn, though not with frequent change, towards the different parts of the assembly, and as almost his only peculiarity of action, would make one step back from his position (which, however, was instantly resumed) at the last word of a climax; an action which inevitably suggested the idea of the recoil of heavy ordnance.* I mention so inconsiderable a circumstance, because I think it has somewhere lately been noticed with a hinted imputation of vanity. But to the feeling of his constant hearers, the cool and hypercritical equally with the rest, it was merely one of those effects which emotion always produces in the exterior in one mode or another, and was accidentally become associated with the rising of his excitement to its highest pitch, just at the sentence which decisively clenched an argument, or gave the last strongest emphasis to an enforcement. This action never occurred but when there *was* a special emphasis in what he said.

Thus the entire possession and actuation of his mind by his subject,

* In sermons plainly and almost exclusively exegetical, or in which bodily disorder repressed his characteristic energy, he would often keep nearly one posture, looking straight forward during the whole service. At all times, his gesture was clear of every trace of art and intention Indeed, he had scarcely any thing of what is meant by gesticulation or action in the schools of oratory. It was what he never thought of for himself, and he despised its artificial exhibition in others, at least in preachers.

ev.dent in every way, was especially so by two signs:—first, that his delivery was simply and unconsciously governed by his mind. When it was particularly animated, or solemn, or pathetic, or indignant, it was such, not by rule, intention, or any thought of rhetorical fitness; but in involuntary accordance with the strain of the thought and feeling. In this sense, he "spake as he was moved:" and consequently nothing in his manner of delivery was either out of the right place, or *in* it by studied adjustment.*

The other indication of being totally surrendered to the subject, and borne on by its impetus when the current became strong, was (in perfect contrast to what is described above) the rapid passing by, and passing away, of any striking sentiment or splendid image. He never detained it in view by reduplications and amplifying phrases, as if he would not let it vanish so soon; as if he were enamoured of it, and wanted his hearers to be so for his sake; as if he wished to stand a while conspicuous by its lustre upon him. It glistened or flashed a moment, and was gone.

The shining points were the more readily thus hastened away, as they intimately belonged to that which was passing. They occurred not as of arbitrary insertion, but with the appropriateness of a natural relation. However unexpectedly any brilliant idea might present itself, its impression was true and immediate to the purpose. Instead of arresting and diverting the attention to itself, as a thing standing out, to be separately admired for its own sake, it fell congenially into the train, and augmented without disturbing the effect. The fine passage would, indeed, in many instances, admit of being taken apart, and would in a detached state retain much of its beauty: but its greatest virtue was in animating the whole combination of sentiments. Mr. Hall's imagination always acted in direct subservience to his intellectual design.

A seriousness of spirit and manner was an invariable characteristic of his preaching, whatever were the topic, or occasion, or place, or preceding social intercourse, or temporary mood of his feelings. As his conversation often abounded with wit, in the strictest sense of the term, with the accompaniment of humour, both frequently playing into satire (in which he was not a little formidable), it has been justly wondered that nothing of this kind appeared in his sermons. I now wish I had ventured to ask him how this happened; whether it was that he had determined, on principle, to forbid himself all strokes and sparkles of that amusing faculty, as in every case detrimental to the effect of preaching; or that no witty turns or fancies did really ever occur to him during that exercise. However the case might be, all the repeaters of his witty vivacities and severities have forborne, as far as I ever heard, to report any one of them as a sentence of a sermon. No more than a single instance is within my own recollection of any thing devious on this side from his accustomed tenor; it was a most biting sarcasm at the hypocritical cant of those wealthy persons who pretend a concern for the promotion of the Christian cause, but, under the affectation

* I remember, at the distance of many years, with what a vivid feeling of the ludicrous he related an anecdote of a preacher, long since deceased, of some account in his day and connexion. He would, in preaching, sometimes weep, or seem to weep, when the people wondered why, as not perceiving in what he was saying any cause for such emotion, in the exact places where it occurred. After his death, one of his hearers happening to inspect some of his manuscript sermons, exclaimed, "I have found the explanation; we used to wonder at the good doctor's weeping with so little reason sometimes, as it seemed. In his sermons, there is written here and there in the margins, 'Cry here;' now I verily believe the doctor sometimes mistook the place, and that was the cause of what appeared so unaccountable."

of a pious trust in Providence for that promotion, take good care to hold fast all but some parsimonious driblets of their money.

The absorbing seizure of his faculties by his subject, when it was prosecuted at uninterrupted length, carried him sometimes, I suspected, into a peculiar and extraordinary state of mind for a public speaker It appeared to me not unfrequently that his ideas pressed into his view so much in the character of living realities, that he lost all distinct sense of the presence of the congregation; so that he had for a while no more than a general and almost unconscious recognition of them as listening to him. His look at such times was that of a person so withdrawn to something within, that he is evidently taking no notice of what his eyes appear to fall upon. In confirmation that the case was so, I remember instances in which, being asked, after the service, whether he had not been grievously annoyed by an almost incessant and most thoughtlessly unrepressed coughing in many parts of the congregation, with other offensive and more voluntary noises, which had destroyed a third part at the least of his sentences for the hearing of a great proportion of the assembly, he said he had not been at all aware there was any such annoyance. It needs not to be observed, to those who have heard him, how necessary it was rendered by the defect of clear, strong sound in his voice, when not forcibly exerted, that no other sounds should interfere.

At other times, however, he was in every sense present to his auditory, and spoke to them in pointed address; especially when a hortatory application at the end made them all feel that he was earnestly desirous to instruct, impress, and persuade.—I may have occasion to advert again, with a somewhat different reference, to the circumstance of his mental abstraction.

It has been observed that he had the command of ample and various resources for illustration and proof. The departments from which he drew the least might be, the facts and philosophy of the material world. His studies had been directed with a strong and habitual preference to the regions of abstraction and metaphysics. And he furnished a fine example of the advantage which may be derived from such studies to the faculty for theological and moral discussions, by a mind at the same time too full of ardour, sentiment, and piety to be cooled and dried into an indifference to every thing but the most disembodied and attenuated speculation. The advantage, as exemplified by him, of the practice and discipline of dealing with truth in the abstract, where a severe attention is required to apprehend it as a real subsistence, to see and grasp it, if I may so speak, in tangible forms, might be noted as twofold. First (that which has been anticipated in former remarks), the utmost precision in every thing he uttered. He could express each dictate of thought in perfect freedom from doubt whether it might not be equivocal; whether it might not be of loose import and vague direction, instead of strictly to the point; whether it might not involve some latent inconsistency within itself or in its immediate conjunction with another idea; whether it were exactly the very thing he intended. It was of complete formation in his understanding; it had its including line and limit, instead of being confused with something else. As it was once happily said by himself of Johnson, "he shone strongly on the angles of a thought." The consequence of his rigorous habits of thinking thus came with eminent value into discourse addressed and intelligible to ordinary good sense, where there was no obvious intervention of that refined speculation which was nevertheless contributing, in effect, so much to the clearness and strength of its consistence.

What was of philosophic quality in its most immediate agency became a popular excellence in its result.

But, secondly, besides the distinctness and precision of all the particulars of thought in detail, that exercise of abstract speculation had brought him into possession and mastery of those general principles, in virtue of which these particular sentiments must have their authority. It is not at all necessary in any ordinary course of instruction, to be continually tracing the particular back, for its verification, to the general; but it is a great advantage to be able to do so when it *is* necessary, as it sometimes will be. He could do this; he knew from what original truths could be deduced the varieties of sentiment which the speaker utters in unqualified assertion, as not liable to be questioned. Any of them, not self-evident, he could have abstracted into a proximate principle in a generalization, and that again resting on a still deeper or ultimate one. He had seen down to the basis, and therefore was confident of the firmness of what he stood upon; unlike a man who is treading on a surface which he perceives or suspects to be hollow, and is ignorant and fearful of what there may be underneath. Or, to change the figure, he could trace the minor outermost ramifications of truth downward into the larger stems, and those larger into the main trunk and the root. This conscious ability of the preacher, or any other discourser, to sustain upon first principles what he is advancing with the freedom of unhesitating assertion and assumption, will impart an habitual assurance of safety while he is expatiating thus in what may be called the outward, free, and popular exposition of his subject.

It is presumed that this representation of the use he made, in sermons, of his power and habits of abstract speculation, may suffice to prevent a notion, in the minds of any of our readers who may seldom or never have heard him, that he was in a specific sense a philosophical or metaphysical preacher. He did often indeed (and it was a distinguishing excellence equally of his talking, preaching, and writing) point to some general principle, and briefly and plainly show how it authorized an opinion. Occasionally, in a more than usually argumentative discourse, he would draw out a more extended deduction. He would also cite from the doctrines of philosophy, with lucid application, some law of the human mind (for instance, and especially, that of association). But still it was far more a *virtual* than a formal result of his abstruser studies that pervaded his preaching.

His intimate acquaintance with many of the greatest authors, whom he had studied with a sentiment of reverence, and whose intellectual and religious wealth was largely drawn into his own capacious faculties, contributed to preclude an ostentation of originality. His sermons would make, on cultivated hearers, a general impression of something new, in the sense of being very different, by eminent superiority, from any common character of preaching; but the novelty would appear less to consist in absolute origination, than in the admirable power of selection and combination. It was not exhibited in a frequency of singularly bold prominent inventions, in the manner of the new mountains and islands sometimes suddenly thrown up on tracts of the globe; but rather in that whole construction of the performance by which the most appropriate topics, from whatever quarter, were brought into one array, were made imposing by aggregation, strong by unity of purpose, and often bright by felicitous apposition; in short, were so plastically ordered as to assume much of the character of a creation. It is probable that if his studies had been of slighter tenor, if his reading had been less, or more desultory, if his faculties had been suffered to run more

loose, his discourses would have more abounded with ideas starting out, as it were singly, with an aspect like nothing ever seen before. His mental ground was cultivated too industriously and regularly for substantial produce, to leave room for those often beautiful wild-flowers which spring spontaneously in a fertile half-wrought soil. His avowed indifference to poetry might be taken as one indication of a mind more adapted to converse with the substantialities of truth than to raise phantoms of invention. Perhaps the most striking feature of his originality was seen in his talent (like the chymistry which brings a latent power into manifestation and action) of drawing from some admitted principle a hitherto unthought-of inference, which affects the whole argument of a question, and leads to a conclusion either new or by a new road.

While he availed himself in his sermons of the powers and means of reason, he constantly referred, I believe with an increased explicitness in the more advanced periods of his ministry, to Revelation as the supreme and final authority. No preacher, or writer on subjects of divinity, was ever more faithful to the principle that all doctrines professing to be Christian must, both in their statement and proof, be founded on the Scriptures, whatever further light or corroboration they may admit from independent reason, or from matter of fact. It is understood that it cost him, at an early season of his life, a great effort, with respect to some particular opinions, to subdue his speculative disposition to such an uncompromising submission to that authority, as to renounce, not only the presumptions which place themselves in contravention to the Scriptures, but all the expedients of a forced or evasive interpretation of them. But the submission became absolute and perpetual. And in this spirit he maintained through life so assiduous a practice of studying the Bible, that he acquired a remarkable facility for citing from every part of it, in the course of his preaching, the passages most pertinent for evidence or enforcement of whatever he was advancing. It would often strike the hearers that probably no texts could have been found in the whole book more exactly to the purpose. Though he studied the Scriptures critically, he was sparing of learned criticism in the pulpit; never resorted to it but when he saw a question of some importance involved in a right or wrong construction or interpretation; and then with the greatest possible brevity. In some few of the instances he might seem to rest too much of the weight of an argument on the acceptation of a single insulated expression; for he was not, from his ability to bring a copious induction of texts in proof of a doctrine, the less tenacious of any and every one which he thought could be vindicated for an assertion or implication of it by a correct interpretation.

In his choice of subjects, a prevailing desire to do good directed him most frequently to those, or to select parts and views of those, that present themselves as of chief importance on the common field of Christianity. When he took what appeared an insulated subject, of a peculiar and perhaps somewhat curious cast, he would seldom fail, while illustrating it in a manner appropriate to itself, to bring it at last, and by an unforced incidence, to coalesce with or merge in some grand generality or cardinal doctrine of Christian faith. This method contributed to maintain a consistency in the doctrine and tendency of his diversified ministrations.

He insisted with the utmost emphasis on the principle that Christianity, instead of being merely a circumstantial modification, or clearer exposition, or augmented sanction, or supplemental adjunct of religion

conceived as in its original subsistence in the relation between the Creator and a race not involved in moral evil, is an absolutely distinct and peculiar economy, appointed for a race that *is* in that disastrous condition, and constituted upon the essentially altered relation, the relation between man as a depraved guilty being and his Maker. In his judgment any theory which does not acknowledge Christianity in this express character positively rejects it; with the guilt, to him who dares this rejection, of insulting the Almighty, and the calamity of being self-doomed to meet the righteous Judge on an interdicted ground, a fatal ground, therefore, where justice will be apart from mercy. From his conviction of the importance of this principle of the peculiarity of the Christian economy, he brought continually in view the doctrines which *constitute* its peculiarity. The scheme of mediation; the Mediator's character, in the various views and lights in which it can be displayed, of dignity and humiliation, of majesty and benignity; his vicarious sacrifice for the atonement of sin; were the subjects of his very marked and habitual preference. On the last of them he enlarged in such extent and frequency, that, with the same perfect conviction as himself of its vital and transcendent importance, I sometimes thought there was hardly a due proportion yielded to the correlative subjects—to that extent and peremptoriness of the requirements of the Divine law, that condition of the human nature, that actual existence and stupendous amount of guilt, which are the *cause* that there is a *necessity* for an atonement.

His practice, just noticed, of prosecuting the discussion of particular subjects, while in a manner strictly appropriate to each as a separate theme, yet also with a bearing towards an ultimate combination with some essential principle of Christianity, conduced to keep almost constantly in view the evangelical principles, those which are peculiarly characteristic of the mediatorial economy; for these were very commonly the points to which the various courses of thought running through his different sermons were made to tend, and where they fell in confluence.

His system of theological tenets (*creed* is an ill-favoured term) was strictly orthodox, on the model of what has come to be denominated moderate Calvinism. With the other conspicuous points, the doctrine of the Trinity,* the divinity of Christ, the atonement, and justification by faith alone, he held the more distinctively Calvinistic doctrine of predestination; though I cannot answer for the precise terms in which he would have stated it; but I presume he would have accepted those employed in the Articles of the Church of England. In preaching he very rarely made any express reference to that doctrine; and his recognition of it by implication was too indistinct for toleration from the rigidly Calvinistic hearers of any preacher not privileged by talents and public favour to bear down all censorial pretensions.

Under our total ignorance of Divine decrees, our ignorance of all but the *general* purpose of the Almighty in the promulgation of the gospel, he considered that men are to be addressed as rational beings, on subjects of which, unless they will practically renounce that property of their nature, they must apprehend the vast importance; subjects which, as well as appealing to their coolest reason, ought to be of mighty force to press on the conscience and the passions; to which it were, conse-

* An exception is to be made in this article for an opinion at one time held by him, and in one of his letters, I think, named by him *Dualism*, but surrendered long before the decline of his life. That opinion was, that the Holy Spirit is to be regarded as a divine energy, or agency, instead of a personal subsistence.

quently, the last absurdity to decline summoning that reason, and arousing those passions. He was therefore exempt from all those restrictions, in respect to the mode of presenting and urging the overtures of redemption, which have been imposed on some good men of the Calvinistic faith by a concern for systematic consistency. He took the utmost liberty in his strain of inculcation; exhorting, inviting, entreating, expostulating, remonstrating; in language of nearly the same tenor as that which might be employed by an Arminian preacher; with the exception, of course, of that notion of free-will, which recurs with such laborious iteration in the preaching of that order, and which was excluded from his faith equally by theological and philosophical reasons. This non-advertence in his sermons to the Calvinistic tenet was not from any secret consciousness that the belief of it is essentially incongruous with his free strain of inculcation; it was not that he might enjoy a license for inconsistency, through the device of keeping one of two incompatible things out of sight; but he judged that neither the doctrine itself, nor the process of reasoning to prove the belief of it, consistent with the most unrestricted language of exhortation, could be made a profitable part of popular instruction. He deemed it authority enough for his practice, independently of all abstracted reasoning on the subject, that he had the example of the divinely inspired preachers urging the demands of the gospel on the unbelievers and the wicked, in the most unmeasured terms of exhortation, the predestinating decrees of Heaven set out of the question; and that in modern experience it is a notorious fact, that those preachers of the Calvinistic school (for one memorable example, Whitfield) who have nevertheless availed themselves of this freedom to the utmost extent, have been incomparably more successful in effecting the great object of preaching, than those who have, somewhat presumptuously, charged themselves with so much responsibility respecting the unknown determination of the Almighty, that they must not call men to faith and repentance lest they should contravene his sovereign purposes.

Perhaps it would not have been expected from Mr. Hall's great capacity, that he should be habitually indisposed to dwell or expatiate long near the borders of the remoter, darker tracts of the regions of religious contemplation. Such, however, appears to have been the fact. If the cause were inquired, undoubtedly one thing that withheld or withdrew him was, a consideration of usefulness, a preference for what was most adapted to be beneficial to his own religious discipline and to the best interests of others. He was amply informed and warned, by his knowledge of the history of philosophy and theology, of the mischiefs of a restless, presumptuous, interminable speculation, a projection of thought, beyond the limits of ascertainable truth. But there was a cause more radical in his mental constitution. That constitution was not predominantly either imaginative or contemplative; it was *intellectual*, in the strictest sense; in the (perhaps arbitrary) sense that the matter of his speculations must be what he could distinctly understand, what he could survey in such form and order as to admit of propositions and reasons; so that the speculative process lost its interest with him if carried into a direction, or if exceeding the limit, where it could no longer be subjected to the methods of proof; in other words, where it ceased to comprehend and reason, and turned into conjecture, sentiment, and fancy. He seemed to have no ambition to stretch out his intellectual domain to an extent which he could not occupy and traverse with some certainty of his movements and measurements. His sphere was very wide, expanded to one circle beyond another, at

each of which in succession he left many other men behind him, arrested by their respective limits; but he was willing to perceive, and even desirous to verify, his own ultimate boundary; and when he came to the line where it was signified to him, "Thus far, and no farther," he stopped, with apparently much less of an impulse than might have been expected in so strong a spirit, to seek an outlet, and attempt an irruption into the dubious territory beyond.

With a mind so constituted and governed, he was less given than many other men of genius have been to those visionary modes of thought; those musings exempt from all regulation; that impatience of aspiration to reach the vast and remote; that fascination of the mysterious, captivating by the very circumstance of eluding; that fearful adventuring on the dark, the unknown, the awful; "those thoughts that wander through eternity," which have often been at once the luxury and the pain of imaginative and highly endowed spirits, discontented with their assigned lot in this tenebrious world. No doubt, in his case, piety would have interfered to restrain such impatience of curiosity, or audacity of ambitious thinking, or indignant strife against the confines of our present allotment, as would have risen to a spirit of insubordination to the Divine appointment. And possibly there were times when this interference was required; but still the structure of his faculties, and the manner of employing them to which it determined him, contributed much to exempt him from that passion to go beyond the mortal sphere which would irreligiously murmur at the limitation. His acquiescence did not seem at least to cost him a strong effort of repression.

This distinction of his intellectual character was obvious in his preaching. He was eminently successful on subjects of an elevated order, which he would expand and illustrate in a manner which sustained them to the high level of their dignity. This carried him near some point of the border of that awful darkness which encompasses, on all sides, our little glimmering field of knowledge; and then it might be seen how aware he was of his approach, how cautiously, or shall I say instinctively, he was held aloof, how sure not to abandon the ground of evidence, by a hazardous incursion of conjecture or imagination into the unknown. He would indicate how near, and in what direction, lay the shaded frontier; but dared not, did not seem even tempted, to invade its "majesty of darkness."

This procedure, in whatever proportion owing to his intellectual temperament or to the ascendency of religion, will be pronounced wise for a *general* practice. If, however, he could have allowed himself in some degree of exception, it would have been gratifying to a portion of his hearers. There are certain mysterious phenomena in the moral economy of our world, which compel, and will not release, the attention of a thoughtful mind, especially if of a gloomy constitutional tendency. Wherever it turns, it still encounters their portentous aspect; often feels arrested and fixed by them as under some potent spell; making an effort, still renewed and still unavailing, to escape from the appalling presence of the vision. Now it was conceived, that a strenuous deliberate exertion of a power of thought like his, after he had been so deeply conversant with important and difficult speculations, might perhaps have contributed something to alleviate this oppression. Not, of course, that it should be dreamed that his, or any still stronger human intelligence, should be able to penetrate with light the black clouds which overshadow our system. But it was imagined possible for such force of reason to impart somewhat of an extenuating quality to the *medium* through which they are beheld, and through which they

might then be beheld with a less painful and total prostration of spirit. It might have been an invaluable service, it was thought, if his whole strength and resources had been applied to display comprehensively the nature, the extent, the solidity of the ground on which faith may rest with a firm confidence in the goodness of the sovereign Governor, notwithstanding all the strange and awful phenomena of our economy.*

This disinclination to adventure into the twilight of speculation was shown in respect to subjects of less formidable mystery, of solemn indeed, but rather attractive than overawing character. For instance the mode, the condition of that conscious existence after death, of which, as a fact, he was so zealous an assertor against the dreary dogma which consigns the soul to insensibility in the separate state: if indeed it *be* any existent state of an intelligence when all we know of its attributes is abolished. It would have been gratifying, and might have been beneficial for serious impression, to see some gleams of his vigorous thought thrown upon the border of that scene of our destiny, so obscure, but at the same time so near, and of transcendent interest; to see the reserved and scattered intimations of the sacred oracles brought into combination, and attempted to be reduced to something approaching to the form of a theory; to see how far any conjectural imaginations could be accompanied by reasons from analogy, and any other principle of probability; with a citation, perhaps, of certain of the least arbitrary and fanciful of the visions of other inquisitive speculators, commented on as he would have commented. But he did not appear to partake of the intense curiosity with which the inquiries and poetical musings of some pious men have been carried into the subject. He seemed, beyond what might have been expected in relation to a matter which lies across the whole breadth of our prospect, and so closely at hand, content to let it remain a *terra incognita* till the hour that puts an end to conjecture. It will be understood that this is mentioned, not with any meaning of animadversion, but as exemplifying that peculiarity of his mental character by which he appeared disinclined to pursue any inquiries beyond the point where substantial evidence fails. The regret of some of his hearers was, that he should not oftener be willing to exert his whole strength to try whether that point be really fixed where it appears and is assumed to be. They would have been gratified to see him undertaking sometimes the discussion of subjects which they would have deprecated any attempt upon by men of ordinary ability. While so superior a mental engine, if I may be allowed the expression, was in their hands, they wished they could *make the most* of its powers.

I have deferred to the last some additional observations, which I shall attempt with considerable difficulty, partly from a doubt whether I may be able to render them plainly intelligible; and partly from apprehension that they may not please some of those who most admired Mr. Hall, of whose talents, however, no man's admiration was higher than mine.

The general purport of what I would say is this,—that while his preaching was superlatively excellent in many of its qualities, it was not, from a defect in certain important ones, the best adapted for salutary efficacy. A short indication of what I would allege would be, that

* It may be mentioned, in further explanation of the indisposition noted above, that in spite of the long and often severe persecution of bodily pain, his temperament was cheerful and buoyant. He had a remarkable facility of finding or making sources and occasions of pleasurable feeling, and averting his mind from gloomy subjects; insomuch that he appeared to be, even on the mere strength of this temperament, much less subject than might have been expected of so enlarged a capacity of thought, to be invaded by the dark and fearful forms which those subjects can assume

it was too general and theoretic; that it presented things too much in unbroken breadth and mass; that it was apt to exceed, in the most eloquent parts, the allowed license of exaggeration; that it was not kept in due relation to the realities of life; that while it was most excellent in the discrimination of topics, sentiments, arguments, it did not discriminate and individualize human characters; that therefore it did not maintain an intimate commerce with the actual condition of the hearers.

It were superfluous to repeat how pre-eminently he displayed, in the perspicuous and convincing statement, development, and confirmation of truth, the primary excellence of preaching, as it is of all instruction: or how earnestly the practical interest of the doctrine was often enforced towards the conclusion of his sermons. The defect, which, nevertheless, I am wishing to mark as not excluded by such rare merit, was, that (as a general fact, and with exceptions) his preaching did not bring and keep the people under a closely *disciplinary* process. It allowed them too much of the privilege of the spectators of a fine and well-ordered series of representation, of such a nature, that they can look on at ease from any similar disturbance to that of the king in Hamlet, at sight of the acted garden-scene.

A consideration of the whole design of preaching might suggest something approaching to a model of what would seem the most probably calculated to attain its several ends, in combination to one grand purpose. We may regard the preacher as holding a kind of comprehensive jurisdiction over the spiritual and moral condition of the congregation, who are a mingled assemblage of all varieties of that condition. Should not, then, the best mode of ministration, for beneficial effect, be that which applies itself to this condition, not only either generally in the mass, or as viewed in the two divisions of religious and irreligious, but also with a special recognition of those varieties?

I need not here say so self-evident a thing as that the *generalities* of religion should be often presented; that the Christian doctrines should be stated and illustrated; that, in a word, the *theory* of Christianity, as a whole, and in its principal branches, should be kept conspicuous in the people's view. But while justice is done to the subjects of general consideration in religion, what a large account there is of more particular matters, on which, and on each of which, it is most important to call men's reason and conscience into exercise. There are the various causes, distinguishable and assignable ones, which frustrate the exhibition of religious truth, and may be so commented on as to show *how* they frustrate it. There is the sad catalogue of the perversities and deceits of the heart; there are the distortions and presumptions of prejudice; the principles which, in disguised form perhaps, and afraid of audacious avowal, but of malignant essence, react against the Divine authority; the subterfuges of insincerity; the various ways in which men evade conviction, falsify in effect the truth to which they assent in terms, or delude themselves in their estimates of their own spirit and conduct. There is the estrangement from reflection, the extreme reluctance to honest self-examination. There is also, in the majority of any large congregation, many of those who make a direct profession of personal religion not excepted, an indistinct apprehension, and a lax application, of the principles and rules of Christian morality. These last, together with the state of men's notions and habits in relation to them, are within the province of the religious instructer; unless the universally, cogently, and even minutely preceptive character of revelation be a grand impertinence.

It is of the utmost importance that things like these should occupy a large space in the ministration. They claim to be made the subject of the preacher's best exertion, to show what they are, by illustrations verified upon the actual state of human beings, and how they interfere with religion in all its doctrines and applications. There is not one of those here noted (and many more might be specified) that would not be, apart, a matter of the most useful discussion for the longest sermon. And if this be true, the majority of the evangelical teachers of our congregations seem very far from being aware (in respect especially to what belongs to the moral department of the great Christian school) of the extent of either the resources or the duties of their office.

But besides the propriety of discoursing on such things formally and at large, there is a valuable use to be made of them in a secondary and more incidental way, by adverting to them, any of them, as the case may require, in short and pointed reference, when any lesson of the religious discipline can by means of them be more strongly fastened on men's minds; on minds which will play loose from its hold if such expedients be not employed to strike and grasp them. Through whatever subject (except the most exclusively speculative) the Christian instructer can direct his course, considerations relating to such matters are, some or other of them, near at hand, to admonish him of something which, if he do not take account of it, will keep him off from obtaining possession of the inner man. And therefore it would be well that, instead of passing by these considerations unnoticed, and prosecuting with exclusive attention the pure *rationale* of his subject, he should admit them to interfere with his progress, should implicate such of them as come most immediately on his track with the train of his observations; sometimes with a short interruption and suspension of that train, in order to take in and insist on an accessory consideration which may turn the subject with a more special pointedness on the hearers than would be done by its strictly regular prosecution. He might thus, without losing sight of the *general* objects of his discourse, give it a particularity, a pressure at critical points, a distinctness of arrest on the attention and conscience.

Now Mr. Hall had, both by the cast of his mind and his addiction to prolonged speculative studies, an inaptitude to such a manner of preaching. His subject took the form of an intellectual theme, homogeneous, continuous, and nowhere allowing a diversion from its order, or a breaking up among its topics to turn any of them for a few moments to a peculiar and insulated use; or admitting the intervention of any thing which would bring the progress to a stand. The channel of his thoughts was so straight on, and the current so full and rapid, that there could be no refluxes and eddies. He entered on his subject with a clear prospect over it to the end; the interest, to himself, of his movement in prosecution of it, was in throwing his mind still forward on the next succeeding part, with a propulsion augmented by each as he passed through it; and he would have been impatient of any thing that should check or turn aside his career. He could not remit and draw in, to stay awhile, so to speak, with some one important observation, to give it individually an aggravated stress, to kindle it into an intense light, deliberately held close to the minds before him, penetrating to the recesses as a trial of the spirit, revealing unsuspected, or but slightly suspected, qualities in the feelings, the motives, the habits; and indicating unthought-of relations between these and the principles of Christianity, the rules of duty, or the conditions of safety. Still pressing vigorously onward, he could not make a pause to revert

unexpectedly on what he had just said; and by an appeal to the hearers for its truth, or by a brief strong inference from it, render it more impressive than it could be as hastily passing away. He could not abate his movement so as to address them with a pointed interrogation, solemn or familiar, in a manner as if waiting for a reply; thus breaking in upon any tendency there might be to their yielding themselves to be carried along in a pleasing revery of admiration and vague assent, drawing them into something like a mental dialogue with him on the point, and awaking them to reflect whether they should make, or were making, any application of it to themselves. That extraordinary degree of withdrawment from recognition of the local scene, when his mind was in its full race, which has been noticed before rather as a circumstance of manner than as affecting the character of his preaching, contributed much to what is here attempted to be described. He did feel, I repeat, a benevolent interest for the congregation, as a *general* sentiment, and at times it would manifest itself expressly and even pathetically; but I still deem it a fact, that during a large proportion of his public exercise, and especially in the seasons of highest excitement, *the subject itself*, as a subject, was the grand interest. It was by *that* that he was filled, possessed, and borne along, with no more than a very general consciousness of being in communication with an auditory. The train of his thoughts, therefore, swept on at a certain altitude, as it were, in the air, rather than proceeded on a level and in contact with the people, in a series of arresting inculcations and inquisitions.

I have said that he did not *individualize* human characters. While he had a deep insight into the structure of human nature as a species, his preaching would sometimes have suggested the remark that was made on a certain philosopher, that he understood *man*, but not *men*"—I say, his *preaching*; for a different apprehension was received from his conversation. He had been acquainted less or more with a very extensive variety of persons, including most of the differences seen in society; had a remarkably exact remembrance of them; and showed, by his characteristic descriptions and anecdotes, that he was not a superficial, though he was not a studiously intentional, observer. At all times he was interested by facts, witnessed or related, which exemplified a leading property, or a peculiar modification, of this strange nature of ours. It was therefore a cause of wonder, notwithstanding all that was so apparent of his habits of abstraction and generalization, that so many forms of the good and evil of humanity, accumulated within the ample magazine of his materials, should not be brought into service, divested, of course, of the peculiarities that would betray individual portraiture, and a little idealized into representatives of classes, but still of such genuine living features, that the people might recognise them as things in actual existence. Forms of character thus discriminately shaped from matter of fact would stand forth exposing what human nature is, not merely as a *general* subject for religious and moral treatment, but also in those special modifications to which the discipline should be applied. It may then be applied with a peculiar and, in the hands of an able man, a striking appropriateness; it will be seen to be fitted to the part; and there can be no question whether its force and probable efficacy will be much in proportion to this evidently specific pertinence. By this practice he who is desirous that truth may strike stands much nearer to his mark, leaving less room for the shaft to pass harmlessly by in a slanting direction, than if he took a general aim from a distance. Let the blended mass of human character be thus resolved into classes, not so small certainly that the address, in order to be appropriate to each,

must be frittered into minute and almost trifling particulars, yet so circumscribed that it may bear on each in one definite manner, and many persons will be made to find their own place, and find themselves brought to account, who would remain quite at their ease under a theoretic generality in the administration of the religious and moral jurisdiction; who might even approve and applaud the very lecture by which they were arraigned and condemned, in perfect impunity from any whisper of the admonition, "Thou art the man." It was to be regretted that the singularly compact conformation, and the speculative and abstract propensity, of Mr. Hall's mind, should so much have precluded his great talents and excellent purpose from this resource for augmenting the efficacy of preaching. It might be anticipated from the nature of the case, and it was verified by observation, that too many of the attendants witnessed some of the brightest displays rather with the feeling of looking at a fine picture than of being confronted by a faithful mirror; and went away equally pleased with a preacher that was so admirable, and with themselves for having the intelligence and taste to admire him.*

There was cause for observation on his manner of placing in contrast the two great divisions, the righteous and the wicked, Christians and men of the world. There should be some essential test of the difference; but then what to do with all those appearances among the professedly better class, which betray so much likeness, after all, to the worse? Nothing can be more perplexing to a thoughtful beholder of men as they are, who, in disregard of all system, *must* take these signs for what they plainly import; and what they plainly import is, that whatever be the essentially distinguishing principle of the separation, there are, in numbers, whom he may not in a judgment of charity pronounce to be no Christians, many grievous and habitual approximations to those who confessedly are none. At times, the whole subject will almost assume, under his view, the appearance of an affair of *gradation*, from the maximum on one side, and the minimum on the other, divided by no wide interval at the point of approach. If he be a public teacher of religion, and in that capacity under a solemn responsibility for the estimates to be entertained of the Christian character, and of themselves, by his hearers, he will have a severe exercise for his caution and discrimination. He may overlook, if he will, the unhappy mixture and competition of evil with the good in the better division of actual human characters; and indulge himself in the pleasure of con-

* A little circumstance, told me a day or two after his last sermon, which was considered of signal intellectual power, and which I have always regretted that I was prevented hearing, may not improperly be mentioned as somewhat in point to what is attempted in these paragraphs. The subject was the sin and absurdity of covetousness. After the service, one of the hearers observed to another, "An admirable sermon—yet why was *such* a sermon preached? For probably not one person in the congregation, though it is not wanting in examples of the vice in question, would take the discourse as at all applicable to himself."—The preacher had employed his whole force on the love of money *as a pure and absolute principle*. The person who made the remark meant to say, that hardly any one will acknowledge to be, or indeed is *conscious* of being, actuated by this pure absolute principle, however tenacious of his money, or insatiably grasping at more. No; the passion enslaves and befools him under secondary and more plausible forms. He wishes to have the means of setting his family advantageously forward in the world; he says so, and thinks so, even though possibly unwilling to do any thing for them as yet. It is desirable to have the means of maintaining a respectable station in society. It is gratifying to be looked up to with the deference universally shown to wealth. Perhaps the man has had experience of straitened circumstances in early life, and cannot make too sure against its recurrence. There is much liability to hazard and losses, and it is prudent to be well provided. It would be a miserable thing to suffer penury in old age.—Now, an invective against the love of money, to be practically useful, would seize and expose it in those modes of its operation under which it hides or palliates its true quality, and beguiles out of all self-suspicion the most desperate idolater of Mammon. A lecture on covetousness, which should concentrate its whole rebuke on the love of money taken abstractedly, might even do mischief; for every hearer who could say he did not *so* love money would confidently infer that therefore he was not guilty of covetousness.

structing and setting up a golden image (not like that which, with a portion of gold, was composed for the greater part of baser materials, as low as clay), the radiant *ideal* of all the Christian graces and virtues assembled in harmony and perfection. But to what end? Is it that the people, when they recover themselves to consideration, may, with grief on the part of the pious and benevolent, and with malignant pleasure on the part of the profane, adjudge the greater proportion of those who have a general acceptance as religious persons, not to be truly such? Or is it that persons sincerely intent on religion, actuated in some considerable degree by its spirit, but painfully conscious of a vast disparity to the pattern so splendidly exhibited, should therefore resign themselves to despondency? Or what else? What else?—unless, after looking up to this consummate pattern, the teacher, taking a descending track of thought, shall exert his best judgment to show, through several degrees cautiously followed downwards, how the genuine principle may exist where there is much at variance with it; insisting, at each grade, on the manner in which it is essential for that principle to act, in proof that it is really there notwithstanding the offensive things that keep their place with it; and solemnly protesting against the fatal propensity to find a ground of safety at the last lowest point at which it may be hoped that the principle may still be not absolutely incompatible with that with which it is inconsistent?

It appeared a serious defect in Mr. Hall's preaching that he practically took on him too little of this responsibility In temporary oblivion of the rule that theoretic description should keep existing fact so much in view that a right adjustment may be made between them, he would expatiate in eloquent latitude on the Christian character, bright and "full-orbed" in all its perfections, of contempt of the world, victory over temptation, elevated devotion, assimilation to the Divine image, zeal for the Divine glory, triumphant faith, expansive charity, sanctity of life; without an intimation, at the time or afterward, that all this, so sublime if it were realized, so obligatory as the attainment towards which a Christian should be, at whatever distance, aspiring, is yet unhappily to be subjected, in behalf of our poor nature, to a cautious discussion of modifications and degrees; especially when the anxious question comes to be, *What deficiencies prove a man to be no Christian?*

Now a hearer, left to some coolness of thought, was tempted to say to himself, What do the people think of this?—if indeed they *do* think, if they be not beguiled away from reflection. How does it strike the many persons in this large assembly who, respectable perhaps as men of the world, make no pretension to what is meant by personal religion; and how those others who despise or hate it, and would hardly endure to hear any thing about it but for the sake of the eloquence which they think might have been more worthily employed?* Are they carrying out, in imagination, this brilliant picture into the real world, where they have observed and descried, with no little vigilance, the culpable tempers, habits, and proceedings, the inconsistencies, weaknesses, and errors, of many whom the preacher himself would be the last man to pronounce altogether destitute of piety? But if they do make this invidious use of the description, will they not with pernicious self-complacency assume—not exactly that all are alike, but—that none are Christians, or that super-emphatically they must be "few that be

* I recollect the instance of a gentleman expressing, at the conclusion of the public service, the highest admiration of the preacher, and adding, "What pity Mr. Hall's great talents had not been destined to the bar or the House of Commons, where he would have made so capital a figure!"

saved," if absolutely *this alone* be Christianity? Why *let* them go off with this mischievous advantage?

And how does it strike the persons here, who stand in the recognised accepted class of the religious? Have they, while hearing this elevated strain, any such thing as reflection on themselves? Is their conscience lulled by what might seem adapted in all reason to alarm it? Have they no secret monition—are the very serpents themselves that infest a corrupt and but imperfectly renovated nature so charmed into stillness that there is no consciousness—of many things which this grand exemplar shines but to expose and condemn? What! is there no internal voice to accuse them, any of them, of such things as a proneness to an excessive love of the world, as coldness of devotion, reluctance to duty, insubordination to the Divine will, lapses into a besetting sin, the indulgence of evil tempers, selfish competition with fellow-mortals, frequent forgetfulness of hereafter? If there be not,—if their admiration of the beautiful image of Christian excellence in the abstract carry them away from all consciousness of what is unlike it in themselves, it is quite time to come down to a strain that shall turn their thoughts homeward, and bring them into a consideration of what they are virtually doing in admiring such a model; shall excite them to reflect, if they so admire one and another feature of it, what they should think of this and the other circumstance in their actual condition. It would be well to bring them to the questions of, What is the difference? and, Why such a difference? and, What would be the right feeling under the self-conviction of such a difference? Let them not be suffered to regard this bright model merely as the ideal representation of something so unattainable on earth, that they are absolved from any serious consideration whether, and how, they have formed a judgment of what *is* attainable and *must* be attained; what they are really wishing to attain; what they think they *have* attained; why it is no more; what are the conscious evils yet unsubdued; what they deem the proportion of those evils to be to the better part; how they measure that proportion, and ascertain the predominance of the good; and whether they be disposed to content themselves with that state of the case.

But if, on the contrary, this bright exhibition of the Christian character, instead of playing harmlessly over them like an aurora borealis, has sent his rays deeply into their souls, and is bringing more plainly to their own view the evils lurking there, the sinful propensities, the spiritual disorders of whatever class, with the addition of the moral and practical ones resulting externally, in what manner are they adjusting that very serious contrast, so as to maintain a confidence that, nevertheless, on the whole the case is safe? No doubt it must be, by making very large allowances for the sad imperfection of our nature. But would it not be well for the Christian instructer to endeavour to take that somewhat hazardous process out of the hands of their self-love, by interfering himself in the adjudication of what may be conceded to a fallen nature, on such conditions as shall not essentially invalidate the demands of religion?

As the last observation I would take the liberty to make, I may note the same prevailing inadvertence to the realities of life in Mr. Hall's manner of representing the *happiness* conferred by religion; premising, as a thing somewhat of a piece with this particular, that he would sometimes indulge in language hardly consonant to either theory or experience in what, undesignedly, it seemed to imply of the *facility* of entering, by a transition of spirit and action, on the Christian life. I will confess he did appear to me, in reference to this matter, to lose

sight too much, when he surrendered himself to the animated current of his sentiments, of the desperate and obstinate alienation of the human soul from its Creator. It was not that he did not most fully believe this to be the condition of our nature, on the evidence of both Scripture and notorious fact; or that he did not hold, according to the strictest Calvinistic construction, the doctrine of the necessity of a special Divine agency for men's conversion to a new spiritual state; but that, when his mind was kindled at the attractions and glories of religion, he would forget, for the time, both how lost are those attractions on a corrupt nature, and what a dreadful combination of influences there is to retain it in its aversion.

But to revert to the specified topic, the representation of the *happiness* of the Christian character. He would describe with a prolonged effusion of beautiful sentiment and language, the delightful confidence in the Divine favour, the harmony and communion of the pious spirit with its God and Saviour, the independence on sublunary things, the superiority to the cares and distractions of life, the serenity of trust in Providence under the greatest trials or most menacing presages, the cordial invariable acquiescence in the Divine dispensations, the victory over the fear of death, the unclouded prospect into eternity. Now it needs not be said that such *would* be the felicities of a condition exalted to the absolute perfection of Christianity; or that the religious instructer should point to these elevations, as the eminence towards which it is the tendency of religion to draw the human spirit, and towards which a Christian is to aspire, however remote his utmost ascent may be from reaching it. He may do well to cite from the memorials of good men some of the examples most remarkably approaching to a practical evidence, that such is the felicity which it is in the nature of religion to impart. And he will have at once to reprove those who, regarding such a privileged existence as something like a visionary scene suspended in the sky, rather than a state partially attainable by mortals, are resting with a dull acquiescence in a poverty of religious enjoyment; and to console and animate those whose earnest aspirations are repressed by the consciousness how little they attain. But if, in describing the happiness of a Christian, he take it at its highest degree, to which the experience of the most devout men has risen only at some favoured seasons (at least if they had much to do with the world's concerns), and spread out the representation in imagery all formed of the finest elements, omitting to advert to the actual state of good men, so beset and overrun with things which deny them to be so happy, it would be inevitable for the supposed cool-minded hearer to have his thoughts once more looking off to matters of fact. He would say to himself, "It may be taken as certain, that many among the sincere Christians in this assembly are in circumstances which must make them listen to this unqualified representation with pain or with incredulity. Some of them are harassed, without the possibility of escape, by the state of their worldly affairs; perhaps suffering or dreading disasters beyond the reach of prudence to prevent; anxiously awaiting a critical turn of events; vexed beyond the patience of Job by the untowardness, selfishness, or dishonesty encountered in their transactions. Some are enduring the cares and hardships of poverty. Some are distressed by bad dispositions among their nearest kindred; perhaps by anticipations, grievous in proportion to their piety, of the conduct and ultimate destiny of their children. Some may have come here for an hour who are fixed in the sad situation of witnessing the slow but certain progress of persons whose life is on all accounts most important to them, in a descent towards the

grave. Some are experiencing, while strenuously maintaining, a severe conflict between the good and evil in their own minds. Some may be in mortifying recollection of lapses into which they have been betrayed. Some are of melancholic temperament; and while striving to keep hold of their faith and hope, are apt to see whatever concerns their welfare in an unfavourable view in every direction, and especially in looking forward to death. Some, of contemplative disposition, are often oppressed, even to a degree of danger to their piety, by the gloom which involves the economy of the world, where moral evil has been predominant through all the course of time. In short, it is probable that the much larger proportion of the religious persons now present are in no condition to allow a possibility of their yielding themselves in sympathy with the spirit of this celebration of the happiness of religion. Would it not, then, be a more useful manner of illustrating this subject, to carry it into a trial on the actual circumstances of the Christian life; to place it, with appropriate discriminations, by the side of the real situations of good men; to show that, notwithstanding all, religion *can* ensure a *preponderance* of happiness; to demonstrate *how* it can do so; to point out the most efficacious means, in each case respectively, and urge their diligent use; to suggest consolations for deficient success, with a note of admonition respecting such of its causes as require that reproof be mixed with encouragement; all the while keeping in view that condition of our existence on earth which renders it inevitable that the happiness created even by religion, for the men most faithfully devoted to it, should not be otherwise than greatly incomplete!"

These observations have grown to a length beyond my intention or expectation; and I should have been better pleased if I could have felt assured that a far less protracted criticism might suffice for an intelligible description of the nature and operation of certain things, in the character of Mr. Hall's ministration, which I had presumed to think not adapted, in the proportion of its eminent intellectual superiority, to practical effect.

It is not to be exacted of the greatest talents that they have an equal aptitude to two widely different modes of operation. Nor is any invidious comparison to be made between the respective merits of excelling in the one and in the other. But, indeed, it were impossible to make any comparative estimate that *should* be invidious to Mr. Hall, if the question were of intellect, considered *purely as a general element of strength*. To attain high excellence in the manner of preaching which I have indicated as what might be a more useful than his, though it require a clear-sighted faculty, disciplined in vigilant and various exercise, is within the competence of a mind of much more limited energy and reach than Mr. Hall's power and range of speculative thought. At the same time it is not to be denied that such a mode of conducting the ministration, whatever were the talents employed, were they even of the highest order, would demand a much more laborious and complicated process than it cost our great preacher to produce his luminous expositions of Christian doctrine, with those eloquent, but too general, practical applications into which the discussion changed towards the close. Indeed, there is reason to believe that, besides the circumstances which I have noted as indisposing and partly unfitting him to adapt his preaching discriminatively to the states and characters of men as they are, another preventing cause was, a repugnance to the kind and degree of labour required in such an operation. For some

passages found in his writings appear to prove that his conception of the most effective manner of preaching was very considerably different from his general practice.* I repeat, his *general* practice; for it would be wrong to dismiss these comments without observing that he did sometimes discuss and illustrate a topic in a special and continued application to circumstances in the plain reality of men's condition. And when he did so it was with striking and valuable effect. I shall, for instance, never forget the admiration with which I heard a sermon, chiefly addressed to the young, from the text, "For every thing there is a time." Nothing could exceed the accuracy of delineation, and the felicitous management of language, with which he marked the circumstances, conjunctures, and temptations of real life: the specific interests, duties, dangers, vices; the consequences in futurity of early wisdom or folly; and the inseparable relation of every temporal and moral interest to religion; with an inculcation of which, conceived in faithful appropriateness to the preceding topics, he closed in a strain of what merited to be irresistible pathos.† Sermons of a tenor to class them with this were heard at intervals, not so wide but that the number might be somewhat considerable within the space of two or three years. It should be observed, however, that their construction was still not wholly diverse from his general manner. The style of address was not marked by rises and falls; did not alternate between familiarity and magisterial dignity; was not modified by varying impulses into a strain which, as was said of Chatham's eloquence, was of every kind by turns. It was sustained, unintermitted, of unrelaxing gravity, in one order of language, and, after a short progress from the commencement, constantly rapid in delivery. But still those sermons were cast in the best imaginable compromise between, on the one hand, the theoretic speculation and high-pitched rhetoric to which he was addicted, and, on the other, that recognition of what men actually are in situation and character, to

* Several paragraphs might be cited from his sermon on the "Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Minister." I will transcribe two or three sentences.

"The epidemic malady of our nature assumes so many shapes, and appears under such a variety of symptoms, that these may be considered as so many distinct diseases, which demand a proportionate variety in the method of treatment. . . . . Without descending to such a minute specification of circumstances as shall make our addresses personal, they ought unquestionably to be characteristic; that the conscience of the audience may feel the hand of the preacher searching it, and every individual know where to class himself. The preacher who aims at doing good will endeavour, above all things, to insulate his hearers, to place each of them apart, and render it impossible for him to escape by losing himself in the crowd. . . . . It is thus the Christian minister should endeavour to prepare the tribunal of conscience, and turn the eyes of every one of his hearers on himself."—Works, vol. i. p. 139, 140.

To the same effect, there are several pages of advice to preachers, in the "Fragment on Village Preaching." The value of the whole section will be but partially apprehended from the following extracts.

"A notion prevails among some, that to preach the gospel includes nothing more than a recital or recapitulation of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. If these are firmly believed and zealously embraced, they are ready to believe the work is done, and that all the virtues of the Christian character will follow by necessary consequence. Hence they satisfy themselves with recommending holiness in general terms, without entering into its particular duties; and this in such a manner as rather to predict it as the result of certain opinions, than to enforce it on the ground of moral obligation. . . . . The conscience is not likely to be touched by general declamations on the evil of sin and the beauty of holiness, without delineation of character. . . . . He must know little of human nature who perceives not the callousness of the human heart, and the perfect indifference with which it can contemplate the most alarming truths when they are presented in a general abstract form. It is not in this way that religious instruction can be made permanently interesting. It is when particular vices are displayed as they appear in real life, when the arts of self-deception are detected, and the vain excuses by which a sinner palliates his guilt, evades the conviction of conscience, and secures a delusive tranquillity—in a word, it is when the heart is forced to see in itself the original of what is described by the apostle; and, perceiving that the secrets of his heart are made manifest, he falls down, and confesses that God is among us of a truth. The reproof which awakened David from his guilty slumber, and made him weep and tremble, turned, not on the general evil of sin, but on the peculiar circumstances of aggravation attending that which he had committed."—Works, vol. ii. p. 194-196.

† One of the reported sermons in the present volume, that on the "Love of God," is a remarkable example of specific illustration, pointedly applied.

which his mind did not so easily descend. They were the sermons which the serious and intelligent hearers regretted that people of every class, in many times the number of the actual congregation, should not have the benefit of hearing; and which it is now their deep and unavailing regret that he could not be induced to render a lasting, I might say a perennial, source of utility to the public.

I cannot be aware whether the opinions, or feelings less definite than opinions, of readers who have had the advantage of hearing Mr. Hall, will coincide with the observations ventured in these latter pages. Those who have heard him but very occasionally will be incompetent judges of their propriety. I remember that at a time very long since, when I had not heard more perhaps than three or four of his sermons, I did not apprehend the justness, or, indeed, very clearly the import, of a remark on that characteristic of his preaching which I have attempted to describe, when made to me by his warm friend and most animated admirer Dr. Ryland; who said that Mr. Hall's preaching had, with an excellence in some respects unrivalled, the fault of being *too general*; and he contrasted it with that of Mr. Hall's father, who had erred, he thought, on the side of a too minute particularity.—But whether these strictures be admitted or questioned, I will confidently take credit with every candid reader, for having, as in the character of historian, and disclaiming the futile office of panegyrist, deliberately aimed at a faithful description of this memorable preacher, as he appeared during that latter period of his public ministrations to which my opportunity of frequent attendance on them has unfortunately been confined.

I can hardly think it should be necessary to protest against such a misunderstanding of these latter pages as should take them to imply that Mr. Hall's preaching was not eminently useful, notwithstanding those qualities of it which tended to prevent its being so in full proportion to the mighty force of mind which it displayed. Its beneficial effect is testified by the experience of a multitude of persons, of various orders of character. Intelligent, cultivated, and inquiring young persons, some of them favourably inclined to religion, but repelled by the uncouth phraseology, and the meanness and trite commonplace illustration, in which they had unfortunately seen it presented; some of them under temptations to skepticism, and others to a rejection of some essential principle of Christianity, were attracted and arrested by a lucid and convincing exhibition of divine truth. Men of literature and talents, and men of the world who were not utterly abandoned to impiety and profligacy, beheld religion set forth with a vigour and a lustre, and with an earnest sincerity infinitely foreign to all mere *professional* display, which once more showed religion worthy to command, and fitted to elevate, the most powerful minds; which augmented the zeal of the faithful among those superior spirits, and sometimes constrained the others to say, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Men of sectarian spirit were cheated of a portion of their bigotry, or forced into a consciousness that they ought to be ashamed of it. And, as a good of a more diffusive kind, numbers of people of the common order were held under an habitual impression of the importance of religion; and the enumeration would, I believe, be very considerable if it could be made, of individuals indebted to his ministry for those effectual convictions which have resulted in their devotement to God, and their happiness in life and death.

It is very possible, that those parts which I have so much dilated on with the view of representing how a different manner might have been more useful, will, by some persons, be acknowledged to be correctly

described as matter of fact, without agreeing with my opinion as to the degree in which they were defective for usefulness. But at all events, and whatever the just exception may be to an unqualified eulogy, it is exactly by those whose discernment the least permitted them to be undiscriminating in their admiration, that the deepest regret is felt for the departure of that great and enlightened spirit. The crude admiration which can make no distinctions never renders justice to what is really great. The colossal form is seen through a mist, dilated perhaps, but obscured and undefined, instead of standing forth conspicuous in its massive solidity and determinate lineaments and dimensions. The less confused apprehension of the object verifies its magnitude while perceiving its clear line of circumscription. The persons who could see where Mr. Hall's rare excellence had a limit short of the ideal perfection of a preacher would, by the same judgment, form the justest and the highest estimate of the offerings which, in his person, reason and genius consecrated to religion—of the force of evidence with which he maintained its doctrines, of the solemn energy with which he urged its obligations, and of the sublimity with which he displayed its relations and prospects.

By those persons, the loss is reflected on with a sentiment peculiar to the event, never experienced before, nor to be expected in any future instance. The removal of any worthy minister, while in full possession and activity of his faculties, is a mournful occurrence; but there is the consideration that many such remain, and that perhaps an equal may follow where the esteemed instructer is withdrawn. But the feeling in the present instance is of a loss altogether irreparable. The cultivated portion of the hearers have a sense of privation partaking of desolateness. An animating influence that pervaded, and enlarged, and raised their minds is extinct. While ready to give due honour to all valuable preachers, and knowing that the lights of religious instruction will still shine with useful lustre, and new ones continually rise, they involuntarily and pensively turn to look at the last fading colours in the distance where the greater luminary has set.

# NOTE.

## SERAMPORE MISSIONARIES.

In this collection of Mr. Hall's works, every thing is inserted that was published with his sanction, and that is known to have been written by him, with the exception of a single letter, which he many years ago engaged to suppress. But, on inserting the letter in reference to the Serampore missionaries (vol ii. p. 444.), I inadvertently omitted to mention, that it received a place in consequence of the general rule thus adopted, and without asking the concurrence of Mr. Foster. I therefore think it right to insert a letter from Mr. Foster, relative to what he regards as Mr. Hall's misapprehension of some main points in a most painful subject of discussion. The controversy between the London committee and the Serampore missionaries, I have always deeply deplored. Yet I have an entire persuasion that the committee did every thing in *their* power to avoid it, and abstained from making it public until they were compelled to do so by a feeling of duty to the society with the management of whose concerns they are intrusted.

OLINTHUS GREGORY.

## TO DR. GREGORY.

MY DEAR SIR,

I observe you have admitted into the second volume of Mr. Hall's works, very possibly without having had time, amid your various and important engagements, for a deliberate consideration, a letter written by Mr. Hall to the "Committee of the Baptist Missionary Society," in March, 1827, on the occasion of a request from the Serampore missionaries, for a certain annual grant of money from that society. As that letter is calculated to injure the character of those missionaries in the estimation of the readers of Mr. Hall's works in times to come, allow me to submit to you, whether it be not a claim of justice that you should give a place, in the concluding volume, to an observation or two which I have to offer.

Some of the points alluded to, with implied censure, in that letter (those respecting the constitutional terms of the relation which had subsisted between the society and those missionaries), will be matters of small account in the view of the future generation of readers. But the main purport and effect of that letter must be, in the apprehension of those readers, to fix a dishonourable imputation on personal character. It is charged upon the Serampore fraternity (as well collectively as in their representative, Dr. Marshman) that they were rapacious of money; that they were apparently practising to see how much of it they could extort, on the strength of their reputation, as presumed by them to be of essential importance to that of the society; that they were already exceeding the utmost pardonable advance of encroachment; that they were likely to be progressive and insatiable in their exactions; and that their possession, at the very same time, of "an extensive revenue," "large pecuniary resources," rendering needless to them the assistance applied for, stamped a peculiar character of arrogance on that attempt at exaction.

Suppose a reader at some distant time to form his judgment exclusively on this representation, as an authentic and sufficient evidence; and what can he think of those men, but that they must have been, to say no more, some of the most

unreasonable of mankind?—that though they did perform things which remain memorable in religious history, they were not worthy of their high vocation, for that the merit of their performances was spoiled by a grasping selfishness and an exorbitant arrogance? This supposition, that the document in question may have on the judgment of readers an effect inimical to the memory of those original missionaries long after they are dead, is authorized by the probability that Mr. Hall's writings will retain a place in public attention and favour long after the occasional productions of the present time, in explanation and defence of the conduct of those missionaries, shall have gone out of knowledge.

Now, my dear sir, let me appeal to your sense of justice whether it be right, that this unqualified invective, written for a temporary purpose, without probably the least thought of publication, and written, as I shall prove to you, under extreme error, should be perpetuated in a standard work, as a stigma on the character of those men, without the admission also into the same work, for equal permanence, of a brief notice adapted to correct the wrong. The wrong is no less than this—that the charge, such as I have described it in plain conformity to the document, is made on men who, having prosecuted a course of indefatigable exertions in the Christian cause, one of them for more than a quarter of a century, and another a much longer time, during more than twenty years of which they had not received or asked any share of the society's income—having supported themselves, and performed their great literary, and their other missionary operations gratuitously—having, besides this, expended in the Christian service, during a long period, several thousand pounds a-year from resources created by their own diligence—and having also contributed very largely by their high reputation to the public credit and success of the society itself—could not, after all this, conceive it to be an unreasonable "exaction," or "extortion," to request the aid of a sixth part of the society's annual income, when at last their own had become greatly diminished, chiefly in consequence of the establishment of other printing-offices and schools in the neighbouring city.

But the case being so, it may be asked, with some surprise, how Mr. Hall could be betrayed to write such a letter. I can assign what must have been the chief cause. He believed he had reason to place implicit confidence in testimony, which assured him, that the Serampore missionaries were at that very time in the possession of superabundant wealth; and he happened not to be in communication with informants who could have proved to him that the contrary was the fact, to a painful extreme. It is from my own immediate knowledge that I make this statement. In a long conversation, just about the time that the letter to the committee was written, he affirmed to me and several other friends, on the authority of testimony which he assigned, and held to be unquestionable, that those missionaries had the command of what might truly be called (speaking in relative proportion to such a concern) an *immense* capital and income. I could give you the sums in figures, but forbear, purely in consideration of their extravagance. Suffice it to say, that the amount was most palpably and enormously beyond any alleged or conceivable necessities of such an establishment. Entirely confident in this belief, he thought of course that an application to the society for aid was a most unreasonable claim; whereas, the fact was, as Dr. Marshman represented, and as Dr. Carey soon after confirmed, that it was made from the pressure of pecuniary difficulty, which was forcing the brethren at Serampore to the alternative of either obtaining assistance in this country or abandoning several of their missionary stations. Had Mr. Hall been aware of the real state of the case, he would not have written a single sentence of that letter. It was unfortunate that he should have been so credulous to delusive representations.

Again appealing to your justice for the insertion of this note of explanation somewhere in the concluding volume,

I remain, my dear sir,

Yours, with the greatest regard,

J. FOSTER.

# NOTES OF SERMONS.

# ADVERTISEMENT.

Of the notes of sermons left by Mr. Hall, several were such mere skeletons that it did not seem expedient to publish them. Of those which have been selected for insertion, such as do not occupy more than eight or nine pages seem simply to have been employed as pulpit notes, without any ulterior reference. Of the remainder, some were undoubtedly, and others probably, written more fully than his usual pulpit notes, that they might serve as the basis of a volume of sermons which he intended to prepare for publication,* should the state of his health, and a moderate freedom from interruption, ever allow him to accomplish his wishes in that respect. As they now appear, however, they are all, in some measure, incomplete; not even the fullest of them are carried to half the extent of the preached sermons; and in but few is the *application* more than hinted.

It will not be expected, then, that these notes should evince the exquisite finish, in point of style, which they would have received from the author, had he prepared them at full length with a view to immediate publication; or that they should abound in those copious and accumulative amplifications of the subjects, or those touching and powerful appeals to the affections and conscience, by which his preaching was so eminently distinguished. Yet they will be found to exhibit the same simple dignity and grace, often the same beauty and pathos, the same richness and variety of illustration, as his other works; while, if I mistake not, they manifest a more fixed and constant determination to elucidate and apply scriptural truth, a more vivid and awful conviction of the infinite importance of salvation to men who have lost the image and favour of God, and a more deep and pervading current of devotional feeling, than even the most admired of his former publications, eloquent, impressive, instructive, and often truly sublime, as they unquestionably are.

In preparing these notes for the press, no changes whatever have been made in the author's language.† In places where words are omitted, or the manuscript is illegible, the sense has been supplied by

* See Note, vol. i. p. 263.

† To prevent misconception, it may be proper to state, that the references to texts at the foot of the pages are not in the original manuscripts, but have been annexed to save the reader the trouble of consulting a concordance, in cases where it may seem desirable to examine passages in connexion with their context.

words introduced between brackets. It was sometimes, however, exceedingly difficult to fill the chasms which thus occurred; and though hope the correct sense has been generally caught and preserved, yet a few cases remain in which I am by no means confident that this desirable result has been obtained.

My object in selecting the Letters, from many more which have been most kindly transmitted by different friends, has not been so much to publish those which exhibit Mr. Hall's *talents*, as those which tend most to illustrate his *character*, and to depict the state of his sentiments and his heart at the periods of his life in which they were respectively written. Some of them, however, will be found truly beautiful; others exemplify his philosophical cast of thought, his admirable discrimination, and the happy facility with which, in a few words, he often separated truth from the semblance of truth; while several bear evidence of the cordiality and permanency of his friendships, and the prompt and delicate sympathy with which, in seasons of affliction or bereavement, he administered the balm of Christian consolation.

I have been aided in the selection of these materials by the excellent judgment of Mr. Foster, and of another highly esteemed friend, the Rev. W. Anderson, of Bristol. They have, indeed, frequently relieved my perplexity, especially with regard to the difficult task of choosing, from among numerous letters which cannot but be interesting to the individuals to whom they were respectively addressed, or to their surviving relatives, such as appeared most likely to be interesting to the public.

For the insertion of about six or eight of the letters, which I sent to the press when I had not an opportunity of consulting them, I hold myself responsible.

On the whole, I cannot but cherish the gratifying persuasion, that these Notes and Letters will be prized, not merely by the friends of Mr. Hall, who value every thing which has proceeded from his pen, but by all who duly estimate the infinite moment of eternal things, and rejoice when religious verities are accurately stated, and impressively enforced.

Olinthus Gregory.

Royal Military Academy,
*Nov.* 16, 1831.

# NOTES OF SERMONS

# NOTES OF SERMONS.

## I.

### ON THE BEING AND NAME OF JEHOVAH.

Exod. iii. 14.—*And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM. and he said, Thus shall ye say to the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.*[*]

I. Let us consider the import of the name; the incommunicable name.
II. The proof of his [God's] possessing the attributes included in it.
III. The probable reasons of his choosing to represent himself under this character.

I. The import of the word Jehovah. It comes from a word which denotes to be, to exist; and the proper import of it appears to be permanent, unchanging existence. In the word Jehovah is included the affixes and terminations of the future and of the past; implying that he centres within himself all past, together with all future, existence.

The name I am in the LXX. is rendered ὁ ὤν.

In the first chapter of the Revelation of St. John, the Lord describes himself under the following character,—"Who is (ὁ ὤν), and who was, and who is to come." It denotes eternal, original, unchanging being.

Solve the difficulty respecting this name not being known to Abraham, to Isaac, and Jacob. He never used that name himself, though *Moses employs* it in reciting the communications he made to the nation.

II. We propose to demonstrate the existence of such a Being.

1. Something always must have existed, or nothing could have had an existence. To suppose the matter of this world, for example, to have arisen out of nothing, without any cause whatever, is evidently to suppose what is absurd and impossible.

2. Whatever exists of itself, and consequently from all eternity, can never cease to exist, and must be perfectly independent of every other being, with respect to existence, and the manner of its existence. Since it exists of itself, the cause and reason of its existence must, by the supposition, be in itself, not in another; it must have, so to speak, a perpetual spring of existence, independent of the operation or will

[*] Preached at Leicester, in October, 1814.

of all other beings. It exists by absolute necessity. It exists because it cannot be otherwise than it is; for whatever can be so is contingent, not necessary. Hence it is absolutely unchangeable: which is sufficient to prove that matter is not that eternal, self-existent Being; because matter is undergoing continual changes; and instead of being unalterable, is perfectly passive and indifferent to all changes whatever.

3. The Being who always existed, in and of himself, must be an intelligent Being, or a Being possessed of reason and understanding: for these exist; and since they could not arise out of nothing, they must have been produced by something or other. But they could not have been produced by what was unintelligent. Reason and understanding could no more have been caused by what had none, than matter could have arisen out of nothing. Take a lump of clay, or of any part of inanimate matter, and ask yourselves whether it is not in the highest degree absurd to suppose that the power of remembering, of reasoning, of judging, should arise from that as a cause. It is, plainly, just as possible that light should spring from darkness as a cause, as that which is incapable of thought should produce it. Whether the power of thinking may possibly be superadded to matter is not the question at present; admitting this were possible, it is plainly impossible that thought, or the power of thinking, should spring from inanimate matter as a cause. But as there are many beings possessed of reason and understanding, there must have been at least some one intelligent Being from eternity, or those thinking creatures could never have existed; since it is quite as impossible that thought and intelligence should arise out of unconscious matter, as that they should spring out of nothing.

As to the idea which some atheists have pleaded for, of an eternal succession of finite beings, such as we witness at present, without supposing any original, uncaused Being, it is evidently inconsistent with reason and with itself. For it affirms that to be true of the part, which it denies with respect to the whole: every particular being in the series, upon that supposition, depends upon a preceding one, yet he whole depends upon nothing; as if it were affirmed that there could be a chain infinitely long, each link of which was supported by the next, and so on, in each instance, and yet the whole absolutely depended upon nothing. The difficulty of supposing a being beginning to exist without a cause is not at all lessened by supposing an eternal succession of such beings; for unless there be some first Being on whom all the rest depend, it is evident the whole series hang upon nothing, which is altogether as impossible as that any one in particular should. Hence it is evident there must have always been one intelligent Being, whose existence is uncaused and absolutely eternal, unchangeable, and independent.

4. There is but one such Being. To affirm there is more than one, without reason, must, by the very terms, be unreasonable. But no shadow of reason can be assigned for believing in a plurality of such beings, because the supposition of one accounts for all that we see, as well, and even much better, than the supposition of more.

That there must be one underived, self-existent, eternal, and intelligent Cause must of necessity be allowed, in order to account for what we know to exist; but no reason can be assigned for supposing more. It is with the utmost propriety established as an axiom, that we ought in no case to assign more causes than will account for the effects.

The harmony and order of the universe, and the sameness and universality of the laws which pervade every part of it as far as our [knowledge*] extends, make it evident that it is the production of one eternal, intelligent Cause. Had it been the product of many, there would necessarily have been discrepancies, irregularities, and disorder in it, as the necessary effect of contrary plans and inclinations; at least, it would have formed different systems, bearing the indication of their being the product of distinct authors: as we see no two individuals, left entirely to themselves, can be found, who would build a house exactly upon the same plan, of the same size, and with the same ornaments. The most fundamental laws of the material world [not only] pervade this globe which we inhabit, but are found to extend to the remotest bounds of the universe, as far as they have fallen under our observation, either by the naked eye or by telescopes. The compound [substance] of light which illuminates our system is found to extend to the region of the fixed stars, immeasurably more distant from us than the sun. The law of gravitation pervades every particle of matter, at least within the solar system; and, there is every reason to believe, throughout the whole universe. Such simplicity and uniformity in the laws of nature evince that they are the product of one and the same Intelligence.

III. We propose to consider why he chose to reveal himself, especially under this character, rather than under some one expression of his moral perfections.

1. This is an attribute of God, to which the heathen deities did not aspire. It was fit to be the name of that Being who was, when worshipped, to be maintained in the midst of surrounding idols, of a character totally distinct.

None of them pretended to be the supreme God, the Origin, and Father of existence.

2. So abstract and elevated a conception of the Great Supreme was less likely than [any] other to be perverted into image-worship.

No ideas are so impossible to paint or represent, under sensible forms, as self-origination, immutability, eternal existence, &c.

The import of Jehovah—not positive—but negative.

3. It exhibits that view of the Divine character which is *most peculiar* and appropriate to the Supreme Being, and from which his other perfections may most satisfactorily be inferred and deduced.

* Mr. Hall's handwriting is frequently so chaotic as to defy all interpretation; and words, and short portions of sentences, are sometimes omitted. In such cases, the sense is supplied conjecturally; and, that the author may not be blamed for any imperfections in style or phraseology, which may thus be occasioned, the words introduced by the editor are uniformly placed between brackets, as above.—Ed.

No other being possesses any degree of them. And from these may be inferred his absolute, infinite perfection, rectitude, &c. &c.

This is the great, glorious, and fearful name, "THE LORD OUR GOD."*

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## II.

## THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE DIVINE NATURE.

ISAIAH XXXI. 3.—*The Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit.*

I. THE spirituality of the Divine nature is intimately connected with the possession of almighty power. The vulgar notion which would restrict the exercise of power to what is corporeal, and deny it to that which is spiritual and immaterial, is a mere prejudice, founded on gross inattention or ignorance. It probably arises chiefly from the resistance which bodies are found to oppose to the effort to remove or displace them. But so remote is this from active power, that it is entirely the effect of the *vis inertiæ*, or the tendency of matter to continue in the [same] state, whether it be of rest or of motion. If we inquire after the original seat of power, we shall invariably find it in mind, not in body; in spirit, not in flesh.

The changes we are able to effect in the state of the objects around us are produced through the instrumentality of the body, which is always previously put in motion by the mind. Volition, which is a faculty, if you please, or state of the mind, moves the muscles and the limbs, and those the various portions of matter by which we are surrounded; so that, in every instance, it is the spirit or immaterial principle which originally acts, and produces all the subsequent changes. Take away the power of volition, which is a mental faculty, and our dominion over nature is at an end. Within a certain sphere, and to a certain extent, the will is absolute; and the moment we will a certain motion of the body, that motion takes place. Though we are far from supposing that the Deity is the soul of the world, as some have vainly asserted, the power which the mind exerts over certain motions of the body may furnish an apt illustration of the control which the Supreme Spirit possesses over the universe.

As we can move certain parts of our bodies at pleasure, and nothing intervenes between the volition and the corresponding movements, so the great original Spirit impresses on the machine of the universe what movements he pleases, and without the intervention of any othe

* Deut. xxviii. 58.

cause. "He speaks, and it is done; he commands, and it stands fast."*

Since it is impossible to conceive of motion arising of its own accord among bodies previously at rest, and motion is not essential to matter, but merely an incidental state, no account can be given of the beginning of motion but from the previous existence of mind; and, however numerous and complicated the links through which it is propagated, however numerous the bodies which are successively moved or impelled by each other, it must necessarily have originated in something immaterial, that is, in mind or spirit. It is as a Spirit that the Deity is the original author of all those successive changes and revolutions which take place in the visible universe arranged by UNSEARCHABLE wisdom, to which it owes all its harmony, utility, and beauty. It is as a Spirit that he exists distinct from it, and superior to it, presiding over it with the absolute dominion of Proprietor and Lord, employing every part of it as an instrument passive in his hand, and perfectly subservient to the accomplishment of his wise and benevolent designs To this great Father of Spirits the very minds which he has formed are in a state of mysterious subordination and subjection, so as to be for ever incapable of transgressing the secret bounds he has allotted them, or doing any thing more, whatever they may propose or intend, than concur in executing his plan, or fulfilling his counsel.

II. His spirituality is closely connected with his invisibility: "The King eternal, immortal, invisible,"† "whom no man hath seen, or can see."‡

Whatever is the object of sight must be perceived under some determinate shape or figure; it must be, consequently, bounded by an outline, and occupy a determinate portion of space, and no more; attributes utterly incompatible with the conception of an infinite Being. He was pleased formerly, indeed, to signalize his presence with his worshippers by visible symbols, by an admixture of clouds and fire, of darkness and splendour; but that these were never intended to exhibit his power, but merely to afford a sensible attestation of his special presence, is evident, from the care he took to prevent his worshippers from entertaining degrading conceptions of his character, by the solemn prohibition of attempting to represent him by an image or picture. And after he had appeared to the congregation of Israel on the mount, Moses is commanded to remind them that they saw no similitude.

(Here speak of the impiety of the Church of Rome, as to these points.)

The only visible representation of the Deity which revelation sanctions is found in his Son incarnate, in "Emmanuel, God with us:"§ "who is the Image of the invisible God."‖ The picturing of the Deity tends to produce degrading conceptions of the divine nature, partly as it circumscribes what is unlimited, and partly, since the human form will generally be selected, by leading men to mingle with the idea of God the imperfections and passions of human nature.

* Ps. xxxiii. 9. † 1 Tim. i. 17. ‡ 1 Tim. vi. 16. § Matt. i. 23. ‖ Col. i 15.

III That God is *spirit*, and not flesh, is a view of his character closely connected with his omnipresence. "Whither shall I go from thy spirit, and whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."*

Matter is subjected to a local circumscription; God, as a spirit, is capable of *coexisting* with every other order of being.

IV. Because God is a *spirit*, and not flesh, he is possessed of infinite wisdom and intelligence. Thought and perception are the attributes of mind, not of matter; of spirit, and not of flesh; and for this reason, the original and great Spirit possesses them in an infinite degree. They cannot belong to matter, because matter is divisible into an infinite number of parts; so that, if the power of thinking subsists in these, there are in reality as many distinct thinking principles as there are parts, and the mind of every individual must be a congeries, or assemblage of an infinite number of minds. But if thought subsists in none of the parts separately taken, it cannot subsist in the whole: because a whole is nothing more or less than all the parts considered together, and nothing can be found in the whole but what previously exists in the several parts.

During the union between the soul and the body, the organs of the latter become the instruments of perception; but it is the mind alone which thinks, which alone is conscious, which sees in the eye, hears in the ear, feels in the touch. The Infinite Spirit is, consequently, all eye, all ear, all intelligence, perception and ....

V. The spirituality of the Divine Nature lays a foundation for the most intimate relation between the intelligent part of the creation and himself. He is emphatically "the Father of spirits." The relation of the parent to the child is very intimate and close, because the parent is the *instrument* of his being; but God is the AUTHOR. The earthly parent is our father after the flesh, the heavenly is our father after the *spirit;* and in proportion as the mind constitutes the most important portion of our nature, the relation subsisting between us and God is the most interesting and the most essential. "He is not far from any of us, seeing we are his offspring: in him we live, and move, and have our being."† The body connects us with the external universe; the soul connects us with God. The flesh is his production; the *spirit* is his image: and, as the former separates us from him by a dissimilarity of nature, so the latter assimilates us to him by the possession of principles and laws congenial with his own.

VI. The spirituality of the Divine Nature fits him for becoming our eternal portion and supreme good. That which constitutes and secures our felicity must be something out of ourselves; since we find our

* Ps. cxxxix. 7-12. † Acts xvii. 27, 28.

selves utterly inadequate to be the source of our own enjoyment, we find that without allying ourselves to an object distinct from our own nature we are desolate and miserable. To retire within our own nature in quest of happiness is an idle and fruitless attempt. The mind feels itself fettered and imprisoned, until it is allowed to go forth and unite itself to some foreign object.

Again, to form the happiness of a mind must be the prerogative of something superior to itself; nor is there any greater superiority conceivable than that of being the source of enjoyment, the bestower of happiness on another. But while it is superior, it must be congenial in its nature. A spiritual being must possess spiritual happiness; the proper enjoyment of the mind must consist in something mental.

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## III.

## OUTLINE OF THE ARGUMENT OF TWELVE LECTURES ON THE SOCINIAN CONTROVERSY.*

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### Introductory Lecture.

Jude 3.—*It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints.*

### Lecture II.

#### ON THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF CHRIST.

Matt. xxii. 41, 42.—*While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?*

Four classes of passages adduced in proof of this.

I. Those passages which speak of the origin of Jesus Christ, and which accompany this by a specification of "the flesh" in such a formula that the flesh is never employed in a similar manner in the history of men.

II. Those passages in which it is affirmed by Jesus Christ and by his disciples, that he did come down from heaven to the earth, and that by virtue of his name.

* Delivered at Leicester in 1822

III. Those passages which, though they do not exactly assert that Jesus Christ existed before he came into our world, yet this is the necessary conclusion from them.

IV. One passage in which our Lord directly affirms this proposition in so many words, and no other proposition. (John viii. 58.)

## Lecture III.

### On the Divinity of Christ.

Matt. xxii. 41, 42.

This attempted to be proved from those passages in which the titles of God are ascribed to Jesus Christ, of which there are *three* kinds:

I. Those in which he is styled the Son of God.

II. Those in which he is styled, not the Son of God, but God himself.

III. Those which are quoted by the apostles from the Old Testament, in which the word Jehovah is ascribed to Jesus Christ.

## Lecture IV.

The Divinity of Christ proved from those passages in which the creation of the visible universe is ascribed to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. This fact established by Scripture testimony, and

II. The attention directed to the necessary conclusion which is to be derived from it, That if Jesus Christ appear by Scripture testimony to be the Creator of all things, he is necessarily God; since the primary idea which man entertains of God identifies those perfections which created the world with the existence of Deity.

## Lecture V.

### The Divinity of Christ proved from his being the object of divine worship.

Worship may be considered as *mental* or *local*. It is to *mental* worship, as consisting of those sentiments of adoration of the Deity for his great mercies, a dependence upon the Author of them, a desire of his favour, and submission to his will, which mark every devout Christian, and expressed in the language of prayer or praise, to which this part of the discussion is chiefly confined.

## Lecture VI.

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST PROVED FROM CERTAIN MISCELLANEOUS CONSIDERATIONS, WHICH COULD NOT WITH CONVENIENCE BE REDUCED TO ANY ONE HEAD, SIMILAR TO THOSE ALREADY BROUGHT FORWARD.

I. If Jesus Christ be not a divine person, let me say, it is utterly inconceivable how he can discharge the office and assumption of Head of the Church, and Lord of the Christian dispensation.

II. The simple humanity of Christ is utterly inconsistent with those perfections which are ascribed to the Saviour, since there is not a single attribute of the divine nature which is not found ascribed in different forms to our Lord Jesus Christ.

III. The idea of the simple humanity of Christ is utterly incompatible with that ardour of sentiment of which he is represented in every part of Scripture as the object.

IV. The divinity of Christ is plain, from the fact of his being created and appointed the Judge of the universe.

## Lecture VII.

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST PROVED TO BE NOT A NEW DOCTRINE, BUT THAT IT WAS KNOWN BEFORE THE NICENE COUNCIL HELD IN THE BEGINNING OF THE FOURTH CENTURY, BY REFERENCES TO THE FATHERS:—BARNABAS, HERMAS, IGNATIUS, CLEMENS ROMANUS, POLYCARP, JUSTIN MARTYR, THEOPHILUS BISHOP OF ANTIOCH, IRENÆUS, TERTULLIAN, CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, ORIGEN, AND CYPRIAN.

[The above five Lectures upon the Divinity of Christ were preached from the same text:—Matt. xxii. 41, 42.]

## Lecture VIII.

ON THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Matt. xxviii. 19.—*Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

The first proof of the personality of the Holy Spirit appears to result from the manner in which the Spirit, whatever is intended by that word, is mentioned in the Scriptures.

In order to understand this, it is necessary to reflect upon the meaning of the word "Spirit."

The first meaning of the term Spirit is wind, or breath. (John iii. 8.)

The next use of the term Spirit, in the Scriptures and other writers, in analogy to this, is to denote the invisible and immaterial part of man, in distinction from that which is corporeal, fleshly, and tangible (Matt. xxvi. 41.)

Again, it is applied to those supernatural agents who are supposed not to be clothed with gross flesh and blood, and not to be possessed of bodies, or any fleshly vehicle whatever. (Luke xxiv. 39; x. 17, 20.)

The fourth meaning of this term is very agreeable to the former. By way of distinction, the word Spirit is applied to the third person in the blessed Trinity; that is, THE SPIRIT, by way of eminence; and is appears to be so employed when it is preceded by the definite article, τὸ πνεῦμα, THE SPIRIT.

The second argument on this subject is derived from the obvious consideration, that the particular acts which are ascribed to the Holy Spirit and its inspirations, are such as are totally inconsistent with any idea but that of his being a proper person.

Speaking is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. (2 Sam. xxiii. 2; 1 Tim. iv. 1; Acts xiii. 2.) Approbation is ascribed to the Spirit. (Acts xv. 28.)

The passion of grief is often applied to the Spirit of God. (Eph. iv. 30; Isaiah lxiii. 10.)

Suffering or permitting is predicated of the Holy Spirit. (Acts xvi. 7.)

Sin can be committed against nothing but a person; but Peter addresses Ananias in these words, "Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" &c. (Acts v. 3, 4; Matt. xii. 32.)

The third argument for the personality of the Holy Spirit is derived from the personal pronouns applied to the Spirit of God, in such a manner as cannot be accounted for, except upon the obvious supposition of the intention of our Saviour to represent the Spirit of God under the character of a person. (John xiv. 16–26; xv. 26; xvi. 13.)

In the fourth place, the passage which has been taken as the foundation of this discourse appears to afford an irrefutable proof of the truth for which we are contending; because the Holy Spirit is here associated in such a manner with two real and divine persons as would render the connexion unaccountable, if a real person was not understood in the third, as well as in the two former instances.

## LECTURE IX.

### ON THE ATONEMENT.

1 Cor. xv. 3.—*For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures.*

I. The first argument in proof of the atonement of Christ is, that the death of the Saviour is repeatedly stated to be a proper sacrifice.

## Lecture X.

### ON THE ATONEMENT.

1 Cor. xv. 3.

II. The second argument for this doctrine is this: That the importance which the inspired writers attach to the blood of Christ is utterly inconsistent with the Socinian hypothesis, of his death being merely an example, and as that of a martyr sealing his testimony with his blood.

III. The inspired writers mention the subject of the death of Christ in such a manner as implies its being a real and proper substitution.

IV. The Scriptures in numerous passages declare that Jesus Christ is the proper cause and author of our salvation, and all the spiritual benefits which the gospel announces.

V. The exaltation of Jesus Christ at the head of the universe, which is expressly declared to be the reward of his sufferings and death, is utterly inconsistent with any supposition short of their being expiatory

## Lecture XI.

### ON THE PERSONALITY AND REAL EXISTENCE OF SATAN.

Matt. iv. 1.—*Then was Jesus led up by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.*

The evidence for this proposition must be a matter of pure revelation; for when we consider the innumerable multitude of beings inferior to us,—a chain that descends from ourselves to the very verge of nonentity, by such mutations of littleness that they are for ever eluding our senses,—they leave it uncertain that there are not as many besides in the middle stages as in open vision. The inference, rather than the contrary, is that they exist in an equal scale—that there are as many gradations of beings raised above us, as there are beneath us. An ascending series is as probable as the descending, though we may not be as familiar with one as with the other. Nor is it improbable that there are invisible or spiritual agents in an inferior order to man. When we consider the infinite variety of forms of which nature is susceptible, it is not improbable that there are in existence beings, either purely spiritual, or possessed of a vehicle so refined as to elude our senses, and therefore justly styled spirits.

But here let us consider the tenor of Scripture on this subject:—

I. The sacred record gives us an idea of a spiritual order of beings styled angels.

II. Let us examine the solutions given by the Socinians of the language of Scripture on this subject, and see whether these solutions will answer the various occasions on which it occurs, and whether the

difficulty of the passages can be considered as removed by the interpretation which these solutions suggest.

Those who oppose the doctrine of the real existence of Satan suppose in general that the words Satan and Devil, are used as a prosopopœia, or personification, though what they are intended to personify they cannot agree [about]. Sometimes they are supposed to personify evil in the abstract; at other times, the Jewish magistrates and priests; at other times, the Roman magistrates and rulers; and at other times, a personal enemy to the apostle Paul in the church.

## Lecture XII.

### ON THE SPIRIT OF SOCINIANISM.

Psalm xix. 7.—*The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.*

I. It is a peculiar characteristic of this system, that as far as it is distinguished from the orthodox, it consists entirely of negations, and is marked by its possessing nothing of all, or nearly all, of those doctrines which the other parts of the professed disciples of Jesus Christ consider most precious and most saving.

II. Unitarianism has a close affinity to Deism.

III. Another feature in this system is its anti-devotional character.

IV. A remarkable feature in the system of the Socinians is their mixture along with their doctrine of metaphysical speculation, which is more replete with danger than any of the errors before mentioned.

V. Another feature in this system is the tame submission to human authority, which seems to distinguish above all other persons those who compose the class styled Modern Unitarians.

VI. The last feature which I shall mention in the system of the Socinians is their zeal for proselytism.

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## IV.

## ON CHRIST'S DIVINITY AND CONDESCENSION.

Phil. ii. 5–9.—*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation.**

That species of excellence to which such language can be applied with sobriety, must be carried to a height and perfection which requires

* Mr. Hall's notes, here given, do not present an outline of the whole sermon, but merely a statement of the principal part of the argument. A tolerably full account of the entire sermon, as it was preached in London, in June 1813, will be inserted hereafter.—Ed.

no ingenuity to discover it; it must strike all eyes, and ravish all hearts.

But since it is benevolence, not in the general idea of it, but under the specific form of condescension, that we are seeking after, we are under the necessity of looking, in the passage before us, for some obvious and striking contrast or opposition between the dignity of the Saviour, and those instances in which he appeared to depart from that dignity. A visible disparity must subsist between what he did, and what he might, from his pre-eminent elevation, have been expected to do.

A part of the Saviour's character to which the inspired writers are continually adverting, and on which they dwell with impassioned energy, must unquestionably present itself in a very conspicuous light, so that no interpretation can for a moment be admitted, which requires much ingenuity to discover the very existence of that virtue it is adduced to illustrate.

There are two opposite opinions entertained respecting the person of Christ, to which, without adverting to the intermediate ones, we shall at present confine our attention, with a view to determine which of these accords best with the professed design of the apostle in introducing it, which is, to illustrate the wonderful condescension of the Son.

The first of these opinions involves the divinity of Christ, supposing him to be the proper Son of God, who assumed our nature into a personal union with himself; and, having in that nature lived a life of poverty and humiliation, expired on the cross for human redemption. The second considers him as a mere man, who had no existence whatever till he came into our world.

Now, let us consider which of these two opposite views best accords with the passage under consideration, contemplated as a professed illustration of his marvellous condescension, "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." We are willing to admit the correction of the common version, suggested by our opponents, and consider the meaning of the latter clause, that he "did not eagerly retain the likeness of God." The force of the adverb which introduces the subsequent clause, and the general structure of the passage, appear to me to justify such an alteration; nor are we aware of any advantage occurring to the system we oppose by such a rendering. The Socinians suppose that the purport of this member of the sentence is to assert, that though our Lord was possessed of miraculous power, by which he might have drawn to himself that homage which is only due to the Supreme Being, yet he declined making such a use of these powers. The first instance of his matchless humility and condescension, on their hypothesis, is in his not impiously turning the weapons with which he was armed against their Author, thus employing himself to establish in his own person that which it was one great end of his mission to subvert. That humility with which the apostle was so much enraptured [consisted, then,] in not being guilty of the grossest ingratitude and impiety; in not betraying his trust by advancing his own honour and interest on the ruins of his from whom he derived his commission. That our Saviour could

not have acted the part which he is supposed to have declined in this instance will surely be admitted; but what a preposterous illustration is that of matchless condescension, which is placed in a mere abstinence from impiety and rebellion!

From the preliminary remarks we have made, I trust it must be sufficiently evident that this cannot be the illustration which St. Paul designed to furnish of unparalleled lowliness and condescension. It deserves to be remarked, too, that in this sense "the form of God" belongs equally to every person who has possessed miraculous powers to an extent not inferior to those exerted by our Saviour, which, as we learn both from the Acts of the Apostles and from the express language of the Saviour himself, was the case with his apostles. In consequence of those powers, St. Paul was on one occasion made an object of idolatry, which he disclaimed with the utmost vehemence and abhorrence; so far was he from assuming any extraordinary merit on account of declining so impious a distinction. Besides, let me ask, would such a use of the supernatural succours afforded our Saviour as to suffer them to be the occasion of his being worshipped have produced their withdrawment? If they would not, there must be some legitimate ground for his being worshipped inapplicable to every other case. If they would, what is there admirable in his declining to convert them to a purpose which he knew would issue in their extinction? Can the inspired writer be supposed for a moment to introduce, with so much pomp and solemnity, a branch of our Lord's conduct which the smallest portion of prudence sufficiently accounts for?

"He made himself of no reputation," or, more literally, "he emptied himself," "he divested himself," the writer most unquestionably means, of somewhat which he heretofore possessed. But of what, on the hypothesis of the simple humanity of Christ, did he divest himself? As this clause commences the positive statement of the instances of his humility, preceded by, contrasted with the dignity involved in the attribute of "being in the form of God," it seems necessary to understand it in relation to that prior dignity. But this, on the Socinian hypothesis, is impossible, since they place the form of God in his possession of miraculous energy, of those supernatural powers of which, from the time of his entering on his ministry, he neither divested himself at any time nor suspended the exercise. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work;" nor is there the slightest intimation throughout the whole evangelical history, that his humility was rendered conspicuous by his declining the exercise of miraculous powers. Here then the illustration, upon the supposition we are combating, completely fails at the very outset, from the total absence of that bold and striking contrast which the first member of the sentence leads us to expect. The form of God is attributed to him as the basis of a certain elevation, let its precise import be what it may. And when the antithetic form of expression prepares us to expect something opposed to it, our expectation is frustrated, and the form of God is still retained. Did this divesture consist of his descending from a superior station in society? But this he never possessed. His worldly rank

and estimation, humble as it was, was as great in the last as in the first period of his ministry. To decline a possible distinction, and to lay aside a distinction already possessed, are certainly things very distinct; nor is it easy to conjecture why, if the former was intended, the latter is expressed: besides that, admitting such a confusion of language to be possible, the conception conveyed bears no relation to the form of God.

The words of the apostle evidently suppose that our Saviour possessed, in the first instance, some great and extraordinary distinction; that, in the execution of his commission, from motives of pure benevolence, he submitted to a state of great comparative meanness and humiliation. The order of the words, as well as the very species of excellence they are designed to illustrate and enforce, necessitate the placing of the dignified attribute first. But on the hypothesis of the simple humanity of Christ, the real order of things, the actual course of events, is just the reverse. Our Saviour, on that hypothesis, was elevated immensely above his native condition by his delegation as the Messiah, and from a state of extreme obscurity and poverty, he became, in consequence of it, possessed of the form of God. His poverty and meanness compose the first stage of his history; and whatever elevation above his equals he afterward possessed, was purely the effect of his appointment to the office of the Messiah. So that in the office he sustains he exhibits a marvellous instance of incredible elevation from meanness, instead of affording a striking example of voluntary humiliation. On the Socinian hypothesis, the whole of what is truly admirable is, that a mean and obscure individual should have been raised from so much meanness, not that he voluntarily submitted to it. It must be obvious to the thoughtful and intelligent that this hypothesis completely frustrates the design of the passage, and presents the whole matter in an inverted position.

His public undertaking, in the room of affording an unparalleled instance of condescending benevolence, is the greatest example of eminent virtue conducting to illustrious honour the world ever witnessed.

In a complex train of action, involving considerable space of time and a great variety of events, if there be any conspicuous feature insisted on in the character of the agent, it ought to be of such a nature as to pervade the whole mass. The benevolence and condescension of our Lord are uniformly represented by the inspired writer as actuating him in the whole course of his proceedings, as the chief spring of his conduct, so as to characterize his whole undertaking. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," saith St. Paul, "how that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich." His giving himself for the church is celebrated as a most interesting instance of condescension and love. But if, apart from his public engagements, as the great Teacher sent from God, he possessed no separate nor original dignity,—if to these engagements he is indebted for all that distinguished him above the meanest peasant in Galilee, what candour or sobriety appear in such representations? If we listen to the writers of the New Testa-

ment, his undertaking the office he sustained was a proof of matchless humility; if we look to the facts, we find all the honour he ever possessed was the pure result of these offices. That it is possible to combine with such views of his character the admission of an eminent portion of virtue, we are far from denying; but it is not that sort of virtue, nor includes any of that sacrifice of personal honour and interest which such representation supposes.

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## V.

## ON THE SPIRIT AND TENDENCY OF SOCINIANISM.

PSALM XIX. 7.—*The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.*

THE minute examination of the minor parts of a great and complex object will not suffice to give us a just conception of it, unless it is joined with an attentive survey of it as a whole. We have hitherto been occupied with the consideration of the errors of the Socinian or Unitarian system in detail. We have endeavoured to evince the opposition of several of its fundamental tenets to the clear, unequivocal testimony of Scripture; and in the course of the inquiry have felt the necessity of descending to minute distinctions and tedious discussions. Could we even suppose the reasoning employed in the several branches of this extensive argument to have wrought all the conviction we could wish, the conclusion might still continue destitute of an adequate impression of the general character and tendency of the system against which these discourses have been directed. Instead of attempting a recapitulation of the topics discussed and the arguments adduced, useless as it would possibly be if slight and general, and insufferably tedious if accurate and extensive, allow me to close these lectures by directing your attention to some of the distinguishing characteristics of the system designated by the appellation of Modern Unitarianism.

I. It will occur to the most superficial observer to remark, that as far as it differs from the orthodox, it is almost entirely a negative system, consisting in a bold denial of nearly all the doctrines which other denominations are wont to regard as the most vital and the most precious. It snatches from us almost every thing to which our affections have been habituated to cling, without presenting them with a single new object.

It is a cold negation, a system of renunciation and dissent, imparting that feeling of desolation to the heart which is inseparable from the extinction of ancient attachments, teaching us no longer to admire, to adore, to trust, or to love—but with a most impaired and attenuated affection—objects in the contemplation of which we before deemed it

safe, and even obligatory, to lose ourselves in the indulgence of these delightful emotions.

Under the pretence of simplifying Christianity, it obliterates so many of its discoveries, and retrenches so many of its truths,—so little is left to occupy the mind, to fill the imagination, or to touch the heart,—that when the attracting novelty and the heat of disputation are subsided, it speedily consigns its converts to apathy and indifference. He who is wont to expatiate in the wide field of revelation, surrounded by all that can gratify the sight or regale the senses, reposing in its green pastures and beside the still, transparent waters, reflecting the azure of the heavens, the lily of the valley, and the cedar of Lebanon, no sooner approaches the confines of Socinianism, than he enters on a dreary and melancholy waste. Whatever is most sweet and attractive in religion,—whatever of the grandeur that elevates, or the solemnity that awes the mind, is inseparably connected with those truths it is the avowed object of that system to subvert; and since it is not what we deny, but what we believe, that nourishes piety, no wonder it languishes under so meager and scanty a diet. The littleness and poverty of the Socinian system ultimately ensures its neglect, because it makes no provision for that appetite for the immense and magnificent which the contemplation of nature inspires and gratifies, and which even reason itself prompts us to anticipate in a revelation from the Eternal Mind.

By stripping religion of its mysteries, it deprives it of more than half its power. It is an exhausting process, by which it is reduced to its lowest term. It consists in affirming that the writers of the New Testament were *not*, properly speaking, inspired, nor infallible guides in divine matters; that Jesus Christ did *not* die for our sins, nor is the proper object of worship, nor even impeccable; that there is *not* any provision made in the sanctification of the Spirit for the aid of spiritual weakness, or the cure of spiritual maladies; that we have *not* an intercessor at the right-hand of God; that Christ is not present with his saints, nor his saints, when they quit the body, present with the Lord; that man is *not* composed of a material and immaterial principle, but consists merely of organized matter, which is totally dissolved at death. To look for elevation of moral sentiment from such a series of pure negations would be "to gather grapes of thorns, and figs of thistles,"—to extract "sunbeams from cucumbers."

II. From hence we naturally remark the close affinity between the Unitarian system and Deism. Aware of the offence which is usually taken at observations of this sort, I would much rather waive them, were the suppression of so important a circumstance compatible with doing justice to the subject. Deism, as distinguished from atheism, embraces almost every thing which the Unitarians profess to believe. The Deist professes to believe in a future state of rewards and punishments,—the Unitarian does no more. The chief difference is, that the Deist derives his conviction on the subject from the principles of natural religion; the Unitarian from the fact of Christ's resurrection. Both arrive at the same point, though they reach it by different routes,

Both maintain the same creed, though on different grounds: so that, allowing the Deist to be fully settled and confirmed in his persuasion of a future world, it is not easy to perceive what advantage the Unitarian possesses over him. If the proofs of a future state upon Christian principles, be acknowledged more clear and convincing than is attainable merely by the light of nature, yet as the operation of opinion is measured by the strength of the persuasion with which it is embraced, and not by the intrinsic force of evidence, the Deist, who cherishes a firm expectation of a life to come, has the same motives for resisting temptation, and patiently continuing in well doing, as the Unitarian. He has learned the same lesson, though under a different master, and is substantially of the same religion.

The points in which they coincide are much more numerous, and more important, than those in which they differ. In their ideas of human nature, as being what it always was, in opposition to the doctrine of the fall; in their rejection of the Trinity, and of all supernatural mysteries; in their belief of the intrinsic efficacy of repentance, and the superfluity of an atonement; in their denial of spiritual aids or internal grace; in their notions of the person of Christ; and, finally, in that lofty confidence in the sufficiency of reason as a guide in the affairs of religion, and its authority to reject doctrines on the ground of antecedent improbability;—in all these momentous articles they concur. If the Deist boldly rejects the claims of revelation *in toto*, the Unitarian, by denying its plenary inspiration, by assuming the fallibility of the apostles, and even of Christ himself, and by resolving its most sublime and mysterious truths into metaphors and allegory, treads close in his steps. It is the same soul which animates the two systems, though residing in different bodies; it is the same metal transfused into distinct moulds.

Though Unitarians repel, with sufficient indignation, the charge of symbolizing with Deists, when advanced by the orthodox, they are so conscious of its truth that they sometimes acknowledge it themselves. In a letter to Mr. Lindsey, Dr. Priestley, speaking of the celebrated Jefferson, President of the United States when he arrived at America, says, "he is generally reported to be an unbeliever;" he adds, "bu' if so, you know he cannot be far from us."

(Here introduce the passages from Smith's Testimony, Vol. I.)

There was a certain period in my life when I was in habits of considerable intercourse with persons who, to say the least, possessed no belief in Christianity. Of these, it was never my lot to meet with one who did not avow great satisfaction in the progress of Socinianism; they appeared to feel a most cordial sympathy with it, and to view its triumphs as their own. They undoubtedly considered it as the natural opening through which men escape from the restraints of revealed religion; as the high road to that complete emancipation which awaits them in the regions of perfect light and liberty.

Whoever has attentively investigated the spirit of modern infidelity must perceive that its enmity is pointed chiefly to those very doctrines which Unitarians deny; that their dislike is not so much to the grand

notion of a future state of rewards and punishments, which sober Theists admit, as to the belief of the fall and the corruption of human nature, which are professed as the basis of the doctrine of redemption. It is, as it originally was, the cross of Christ which is foolishness to these Greeks; and here our opponents are confederated with them, and affirm themselves most faithful and zealous allies. Infidels, however they may dissent from the pretensions to a revelation, will feel no lively interest in impugning it while it imposes no necessity of believing what materially contradicts their prejudices and passions. Their quarrel is not so much with the medium of communication as with the doctrine conveyed: and here Socinianism offers a most amicable accommodation, by assuring them of a future state, in which the perfections of the Supreme Being oblige him to render them eternally happy. These men are not so perverse as to feel any repugnance to a Deity who has no punitive justice, and an eternity which has no hell. It is the constant boast of our opponents, that their system gives them such an advantage in an attempt to win over infidels to the Christian cause, by its being purged of those doctrines which afford the chief matter of offence; and in this representation there is doubtless some appearance of truth. But whether, upon that account, they are likely to be more successful in converting [them] than ourselves, may well be made a question. For, in the first place, they will not find it so easy a task as they suppose to convince them that the obnoxious tenets are not the doctrines of the gospel; and next, if they should succeed in this, the difference between their system and pure Theism is so slight and inconsiderable, as to make it appear a matter of great indifference which they adopt. Unless they are prepared to call in question the moral attributes of Deity and a future state, they are all in possession of the Unitarian gospel already, and that by a mode of acquisition more flattering to the pride of reason. In a much vaunted seminary, or college, as it was called, established above thirty years back, for the avowed purpose of propagating Unitarianism throughout the kingdom, I have the highest authority* for affirming that a great proportion of the students became skeptics and unbelievers, and of none more than from those who attended the theological lectures. Had that institution continued, it bid fair to become the most prolific hot-bed of infidelity this country ever knew. Among those who had an education completely Socinian, it is matter of palpable observation, that infidelity has prevailed to a great extent; nor will the genuine tendency of that system have an opportunity of completely developing itself, in this respect, until the existing generation is swept away. In the denomination where it chiefly prevails, it has recently supplanted Arianism, under which the greater part of its present disciples were educated, so that its influence in the formation of character has been shared with a preceding system, which, however erroneous, is far removed from that total abandonment of all the peculiarities of the gospel which is involved in the Socinian creed.

* Hackney College. The authority here referred to is that of the late Dr. Abraham Rees, who was one of the professors.—Ed.

*Fas est et ab hoste doceri.* Surely the complacency felt by the avowed enemies of the Christian religion for a particular modification of it, is not without its instruction or its warning; since, allowing them the ordinary sagacity necessary to discern their own interests, we may be sure they perceive in the object of their predilection the seeds of ruin to the Christian cause; that they plainly see that Unitarianism is a stepping-stone to infidelity. and that the first stage of the progress facilitates and almost secures the next.

III. A third feature in the Unitarian system is the unfavourable influence it exerts on the spirit of devotion. It appears to have little or no connexion with the religion of the heart. Of all high and raised affections to God *proudly ignorant;* love to Christ, involving that ardent attachment which enthrones him in the soul, and subordinates to him every created object, it systematically explodes, under the pretence of its being either enthusiastic or impossible. Mr. Belsham, in a recent work, argues at large against indulging, or pretending to indulge, any particular attachment to the person of the Saviour, such as he acknowledges his immediate disciples felt, but which, according to him, is no longer the duty of Christians of the present day. The only reason he assigns for this bold assault on the most vital part of practical Christianity is the invisibility of our Saviour,—a reason urged in open contempt of the sentiments of an inspired apostle, "whom," said he, "having *not* seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."*

By parity of reason, God, who is essentially invisible, must cease to be the object of our affections; and the obligation of loving him with all our heart and all our strength is at once cancelled and destroyed.

The devotional feelings inculcated in the Bible are intimately and inseparably interwoven with humility and gratitude—the humility and gratitude of a penitent and redeemed sinner. That he who is forgiven much will love much, is the decision of our Lord; while he to whom little is forgiven will love little.† But the perpetual tendency of the Socinian system extenuates the evil of sin, and the magnitude of the danger to which it exposes the sinner, and is calculated to weaken, beyond expression, the force of the motives [they supply.]

By asserting the intrinsic efficacy of repentance, to the exclusion of the merits of the Redeemer, it makes every man his own Saviour; it directs his attention to himself, as the source to which he ascribes the removal of guilt, and the renovation of hope; nor will it permit him to adopt, in any obvious and intelligible sense, the rapturous language of the redeemed, "To him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." Taught to consider the Lord Jesus Christ in no other light than as the most perfect example and the most enlightened of teachers, and believing that he has already bestowed all the benefits he is empowered to bestow, it is in vain to look for that consecration of the heart to his love, and of all the faculties of body and mind to his service, which may reasonably be expected from him who looks

* 1 Pet. i. 8. † Luke vii. 47.

upon himself as a trophy of his power, and as the purchase of his blood. Not viewing himself as at any time exposed to condemnation, you must not expect him to celebrate, with elevated emotion, the riches of Divine grace, much less that he should be transported with gratitude to God for the inestimable love evinced in the gift of his Son; when he considers it a high attainment to have learned that this Son is a mere man, on a level with himself. The unhappy disciple of this system is necessarily separated and cut off from the objects most adapted to touch the springs of religious sensibility. He knows nothing of a transition "from death unto life;" nothing of the anxieties of a wounded and awakened conscience, followed by "joy and peace in believing;" nothing of that "love of Christ which passeth knowledge;" nothing of the refreshing aids and consolations of that Holy Spirit whose existence he denies, whose agency he ridicules; nothing of that ineffable communion of spirit with God and the Redeemer, the true element of life and peace; nothing of the earnests and foretastes of that heaven which his system covers with a dense and impenetrable veil

Facts on this subject concur with theory: for no sooner is a min ister of the gospel transformed into a Socinian, than he relinquishes the practice of extempore prayer, and has recourse to a written form. We are far from condemning the use of forms, where they are adopted from a conscientious preference; nor can we doubt that many members of the establishment, whose habits have combined with them the most devout associations and feelings, find them useful helps to piety. But, that those who have never used them before should find them necessary the moment they have embraced a particular system,—that they should feel, as some of the most *eminent* have confessed, an absolute incapacity, from that time, of praying without the aid of a book, affords a portentous indication of the spirit of that system. To be smitten dumb and silent in the presence of that heavenly Father whom they approached before with filial freedom and confidence,—to be unable or indisposed to utter a word without artificial aids, where they were wont to pour out all their hearts, evinces the visitation of a new spirit, but most assuredly not that Spirit "whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Correct, elegant, spiritless—replete with acknowledgments of the general goodness of God, the bounties of his providence, and his benign interposition in the arrangements of society, and the success of the arts and sciences which embellish and adorn the present state—seldom will you hear any mention of the forgiveness of sins, of the love of the Saviour; few or no acknowledgments of the blessings of redemption. An earthly, unsanctified tincture pervades their devotions, calculated to remind you of any thing rather than of a penitent pleading for mercy, "with groanings that cannot be uttered."

In all other dissenting communities, there are meetings for the express purpose of prayer; but has any thing of that nature ever been heard of among Socinians? If they have any meetings out of the usual seasons of worship, they are debating clubs, several of which have been established among them in the metropolis on the Lord's day.

Among other dissenters, the religious observance of the Lord's day

is considered as of the first importance, and he who made light of it would forfeit with them all credit for piety. Among the Unitarians it is the reverse. Mr. Belsham, who seems to affect the character of their leader, has written vehemently against the observance of a Sabbath, denouncing it as one of the most pernicious of popular errors; and has lost no reputation by it.

Another of their principal writers has denounced public worship. In short, it is not easy to conjecture where these attacks will end, and whether they will suffer any of the institutions of Christianity to remain unassailed.

IV. But it is time to advert to another part of the system of modern Unitarianism, which, in my humble opinion, is pregnant with more mischief and danger than any of those we have just mentioned. I mean the fatalism and materialism with which, since Dr. Priestley's time, it is almost universally incorporated. The first Socinians were so jealous of every opinion which might seem to infringe on the freedom of the human will and man's accountability, that they denied that the foreknowledge of God extended to human volition and contingent events. They carried Pelagianism to its utmost length. The modern Socinians have been betrayed into the contrary extreme. They assert, not only that the foreknowledge of the Deity is extended to every sort of events, but that he has connected the whole series of them in an indissoluble chain of necessity; that the Deity is the efficient cause of all that takes place, of evil volitions as well as good; that he is, properly speaking, the only agent in the universe; that moral evil is his production, and his only; and that, strictly speaking, no one can be said to be accountable for any of his actions, since they were the inevitable result of necessary laws, and could not possibly have been otherwise than they were; that the human mind is a machine governed by principles to whose operations it is perfectly passive.

Who does not see, that upon this theory the distinction between virtue and vice, innocence and guilt, is annihilated, and the foundation of rewards and punishments in a future world completely subverted? Agreeably to this, Dr. Priestley declares, in his treatise on this subject, that a perfect necessitarian in other words, a philosopher of his own stamp, has nothing to do with repentance or remorse. Let these views of human nature prevail universally, and a frightful dissoluteness of manners, and a consequent subversion of the whole fabric of society, must infallibly ensue.

Alarming as these principles are, they form but one portion of the perilous innovations introduced by the sect of modern Unitarians. With the dangerous speculations already recited they connect the following:—that the nature of man is single and homogeneous, not consisting of two component parts or principles, body and soul, matter and spirit, but of matter only; that the soul is the brain, and the brain is the soul; that nothing survives the stroke of dissolution, but that at the moment the thinking powers of man are extinguished, all the elements of his frame are dissolved, his consciousness ceases, to be restored only at the period of the final resurrection.

From these premises it seems to be a necessary inference, that the hope of a future state of existence is entirely delusive; for, if the whole man perishes, if all that composes what I call myself is dissipated and scattered, and I cease to exist for ages as a sentient and intelligent being, personal identity is lost, and being once lost, it is impossible to conceive it ever restored without the greatest absurdity. Thus the very subject of a future life, the very thing of which it is affirmed, perishes from under us, on the Unitarian hypothesis; and a future state can be predicated of any man only in a lax and figurative sense

Matter is incessantly liable to mutation; the matter of which our bodies are composed is so eminently so, that it is generally thought by physiologists that every particle of which it is constituted disappears, and is replaced by fresh accession in the course of about seven years. Let it be admitted, then, that the constitution of human nature is homogeneous, or, in other words, that it consists of matter only, and it will necessarily follow, that in the course of forty-nine years the personal identity has been extinguished seven times, and that seven different persons have succeeded each other under the same name. Which of these, let me now ask, will be rewarded or punished in another life?

Such are the moral prodigies which disfigure the system of modern Unitarianism; such the hopelessness of reconciling it with human accountability, and the dispensation of rewards and punishments in the world to come.

V. The unexampled deference it displays to human authority. This may excite surprise, because there is nothing which its abetters proclaim [with] such loud and lofty pretensions as their unfettered freedom of thought, their emancipation from prejudice, and their disdain of human prescription. They, and they only, if we believe them, have unfurled the banners of mental independence, have purged off the slough of obsolete opinion and implicit faith, and shine forth in all the freshness, vigour, and splendour of intellectual prowess.

VI. Their rage for proselytism, difficult to be accounted for on their principles.

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## VI.

## ON ANGELS.

HEB. i. 14.—*Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*

IN this part of the Epistle, St. Paul is engaged in establishing the superiority of our Lord Jesus Christ to angels: of this he adduces various proofs out of the ancient Scriptures: the title of Son, by which

he [God] addresses the Messiah; the command he issues, when he brings him into the world, that all the angels of God should worship him: "He maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flame of fire: but of the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Nor did he ever say to the most exalted of these, "Sit on my right until I make thine enemies thy footstool." He then brings in the words of the text, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

As this is one of the most clear and precise accounts we meet with in the sacred volume of the nature and offices of angels, it may form a proper basis for a few reflections on that subject. This account embraces two particulars:

I. They are ministering spirits.

II. They are sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation.

I. They are spirits. They have not those gross and earthly bodies which we possess; sluggish, inactive, and incapable of keeping pace with the nimble and more rapid movements of the mind.—"Who maketh his angels spirits: his ministers a flame of fire." They resemble fire in the refined subtilty of its parts, and the quickness and rapidity of its operations. They move with an inconceivable velocity, and execute their commission with a despatch of which we are incapable of forming any [adequate] apprehension.

St. Paul styles them angels of light, probably not without a view to the ease with which they transport themselves to the greatest distances, and appear and disappear in a moment. From their being called spirits, it is not necessary to conclude that they have no body, no material frame at all: to be entirely immaterial is probably peculiar to the Father of spirits, to whom we cannot attribute a body without impiety, and involving ourselves in absurdities. When the term spirit is employed to denote the angelic nature, it is most natural to take it in a lower sense, to denote their exemption from those gross and earthly bodies which the inhabitants of this world possess. Their bodies are spiritual bodies, "for there is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body;" the latter of which the righteous are to receive at the resurrection, who are then to be made equal to the angels.

The passage just before adduced seems to exclude the idea of the utter absence of matter: "who maketh his angels spirits: his ministers a flame of fire."

2. These spirits are very glorious. They occupy a very exalted rank in the scale of being, and are possessed of wonderful powers. They are celebrated by the Psalmist as "those who excel in strength." To this it may be objected, that David in describing man, represents him as made a little lower than the angels: it should, I apprehend, be rendered, "for a little time lower than the angels," that is, during the time he [the Son of God] condescended to become incarnate. Their great power is sufficiently manifest from the works they have performed by divine commission:—the destruction of the first-born of Egypt; the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah; the

destruction of 180,000 men in Sennacherib's army. One angel destroyed 70,000 men, by bringing a pestilence, when David numbered the people of Israel.*

Their appearance was such as to fill the greatest of prophets with consternation and horror. "And there remained no more strength in me,† and my comeliness was turned into corruption, and I retained no strength."

With ease an angel rolled away the stone, a large fragment of rock, laid at the door of our Saviour's sepulchre: and at the sight of him the Roman guard trembled, and became as dead men.

"After these things, I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great power, and the earth was lightened at his glory."

3. They are not less distinguished for moral excellence than by the possession of great natural powers. The usual denomination given them in the Scriptures is, "*holy* angels." They consist of such spirits as stood fast in their integrity, when many of their associates involved themselves in ruin by wilful rebellion. They are styled by St. Paul "elect angels," who are confirmed in a state of happiness by being, along with the church, reduced under one Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. Their confirmation in a state of obedience and felicity is owing (there is every reason to conclude) to their union with him, and their being included in an eternal choice of special election and favour.

They are Christ's holy angels. To this mystery there are several allusions in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians: "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth."

II. They are ministering spirits. Their employment and office is to minister in the presence of God. Their habitation is heaven, that is, the place where God has fixed his throne and manifests his glory. They are emphatically described by this circumstance, "The angels that are in heaven." There is, doubtless, a place in the immense dominions of the Deity where God is beheld in his glory, and where he is worshipped with the highest forms of love and adoration. "Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne," &c.‡ Thither Jesus ascended when he left our world; there he sits on the right-hand of the Majesty on high; and there it is that the holy angels reside, as their fixed habitation. From thence it was the rebellious spirits were expelled, "who kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation."§ "Bless the Lord, all ye his angels, that excel in strength; that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his that do his pleasure."‖

Their employment is to minister to God in the exalted services of the celestial temple. This is the proper business and happiness of heaven, and in this the holy angels are habitually employed. To contem-

* 2 Sam. xxiv. 15. † Dan. x. 8. ‡ Matt. v. 34. § Jude 6. ‖ Ps. ciii. 21

plate the perfections, to celebrate the praises of the Great Eternal; to bow before him in lowly prostrations, and to render him the honour due unto his wonderful works in nature, providence, and grace, is their proper employ. As more of God is conspicuous in the mystery of redemption than in any other work, this will occupy a proportionable part in their praises. "And I beheld," saith St. John, "and heard the voice of many angels around the throne, and around the four living creatures, and around the four-and-twenty elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying, with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

It is not for us to conceive in what particulars the services of heaven consist, after what manner the glorious Supreme will display himself, and [by] what forms of adoration he will be praised. These mysteries are hid from us; "for who hath ascended up into heaven?" Yet we may be certain they will be in the highest degree pure, spiritual, and sublime; the noblest exercise of the most exalted faculties on the greatest and best of Beings.

The term ministering spirits (λειτουργικὰ) [used] here, signifies that species of services which is employed in sacred things. It is true, St. John declares that in the New Jerusalem he saw no temple, for a temple implies a building appropriated to the worship of God, in contradistinction to the secular purposes to which other edifices are applied. In this sense there will be in heaven no temple, because the whole of those blessed regions will be filled with the immediate presence of God, and so be a temple. There was no room for a separation of any part to a sacred and religious use, when all was sacred. The reason St. John assigns for this circumstance sufficiently explains his meaning: "And I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God and the Lamb are the temple thereof."

On that immediate presence which fills the heavenly world, the angels are constant attendants; they continually stand before the Divine Majesty.

The most exact representation of the heavenly world (considered as a place) that was ever given to men, was the ancient tabernacle, formed after the pattern given in the Mount.* The mercy-seat was attended with two cherubim, and the two curtains which formed the tabernacle were filled with figures of cherubim; "With cherubim of cunning work shalt thou make them."†

In the visions of the ancient prophets, when a glimpse of heaven was given, every appearance of God was attended with creatures of an angelic order. "A fiery stream issued forth, and came forth from before him; thousands of thousands ministered unto him, ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him."—(Daniel.) See also Isaiah: "In the year king Uzzah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the

* Heb. ix. 22, 24. † Exod. xxvi. 1.

seraphim." Ezekiel "beheld the cherubim, over which was a sapphire firmament, over which a throne was seen, and one sitting upon it like the appearance of a man, whose head was encircled with a rainbow. This," he adds, "was an appearance of the likeness of the glory of God."

"Then the Spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a great rushing sound, saying, Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place. I heard also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels over against them, and the noise of a great rushing."*

Our Lord warns us against despising the least of those who believe on him, from this consideration, "That their angels do always behold the face of God in heaven." The angel who appeared to Zachariah thus announces himself, "I am Gabriel, who stand in the presence of God."

*Improvement of Part I.*

I. Let us reflect on the greatness of God, and the glory of Christ

II. On the dignity of religion, considered as constituting the employment and felicity of such glorious spirits.

## Second Part.

They are sent forth to minister for those who are to inherit salvation.

I. Though they are so superior, they, with much alacrity, engage in offices of love to believers, from a consideration of the dignity which awaits them; they are hastening on to possess salvation.

They (believers) are soon to be associated with them, to be sharers of their privileges, partakers of their glory. Infantine as is their present weakness, they are considerable on account of their future greatness. The infant of the family is not neglected or despised by the more advanced branches of it; they anticipate the development of its faculties. They know the time will arrive when it will attain an equality with themselves. They that shall be thought worthy to obtain that world, at the resurrection of the just, "shall be equal to the angels."

1. Though they are now mortal, they are the heirs of immortality.

2. Though they are encompassed with infirmities and imperfections, those blessed spirits well know they will shortly become entirely like Christ.

3. Though they are immersed in trifling cares, and have necessarily much intercourse with the things of time and sense, they entertain noble thoughts, cherish high expectations, and, having the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan earnestly desiring to be delivered. And ever and anon wet with the dews of heaven, and anointed afresh with the Holy Spirit, they wear upon their spirits the Divine impress, which these blessed spirits distinctly perceive.

* Ezek. iii. 12, 13

II. The intimate union of believers with the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom angels are in immediate subjection, [also] entitles them to their benevolent offices. They are members of Christ, his brothers and sisters; they are taken into a still closer relation than the conjugal one: and are parts of that nature in which the Lord is glorified.

The nature of the benevolent offices [angels] perform for the church.—They are not the servants of the church, but the servants of Christ for the benefit of the church. Their stated employment is to minister in heaven, whence, on particular occasions, they are sent on benevolent embassies for the good of the church. What are these services? What have angels done, and what are they doing, for the benefit and in behalf of the heirs of salvation?

1. The heirs of salvation are indebted to them for much prophetic information, as well as for many important directions. See Daniel. Paul going to Macedonia.

2. The heirs of salvation have often been indebted to angelic interposition for their protection in seasons of extreme danger; for example, Daniel in the lions' den; Peter's rescue from prison; Peter and John, (see Acts v.); the deliverance of Elisha at Dothan.* "He shall give his angels charge over thee, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." "The angel of the Lord encampeth about them that fear him." Many secret deliverances for which we are indebted to angelic influence.

3. The support which good men have received in the season of extreme pain and suffering. "An angel appeared unto him, strengthening him."

4. A moral influence, equal in extent, though of an opposite nature, to that which evil spirits exert.

5. To assist in dying moments; to convey the spirit to the mansions of peace: they let in those gleams of heaven into the soul.

6. To gather the saints [together] in the presence of Christ at the last day, and to vindicate their cause by a final victory over their enemies. "The harvest is the end of the world, and the angels are the reapers." "The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire."

*Improvement.*

I. How great the dignity of real Christians.

II. How delightful the prospect of the heavenly world

* 2 Kings vi. 15-17.

# VII.

## ON THE PERSONALITY OF SATAN.

1 PET. v. 8.—*Your adversary the devil goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*

IT is highly probable, independently of revelation, that there are many orders of beings superior to [man.]* To suppose our own species to be the highest production of Divine power would indicate irrational and puerile presumption. When we consider the infinite variety of creatures presented to our notice in the descending scale between us and nothing, it is agreeable to analogy to conceive the number is not less of those which are above us; the probability of which is enhanced by the discoveries now made of the extent of the universe, and of the existence of bodies, compared to which the globe which we inhabit is but a spot. While there are known to be material systems immensely superior in magnitude to that with which we are conversant, what should lead us to doubt that there are in the intellectual world beings possessing an equal mental superiority? It surely will not be pretended that there are any properties discernible in man that mark him out as the most transcendent workmanship of Deity, the masterpiece of Almighty power, or that there is any ground for supposing creative energy suspended its operations here, rather than at any other point in its progress. The distance between us and nothing is finite, yet the interval is occupied and filled up with innumerable orders of sensitive beings: how improbable is it, then, that the distance between us and Deity, which is infinite, is an empty void!

Nor is it any just objection against the supposition in question that these superior orders are not usually discernible by our senses. The information derived from our senses, aided and corrected by reflection is a sufficient guide in the practical concerns of life, but is a very uncertain criterion by which to determine the actual existence of things beyond a very narrow limit. Of those that are known to exist, some beings are so minute as to elude their notice, others so vast as to exceed their grasp. There are, probably, many material substances, whose subtilty exempts them entirely from that cognizance; there are others which can only be perceived by the help of instruments.

* Mr. Hall preached three sermons at Leicester on the personality and agency of Satan, besides that which he introduced into his series of lectures on the Socinian controversy. The substance of these he also condensed into a single sermon, and preached at Cambridge in October, 1823, and afterward at Bristol. Indeed, he thought the subject of so much moment, and so strangely neglected, that he prepared his three sermons for publication; but, by some singular accident, the manuscript was lost, just as he had completed it. After an interval of three or four years, he recommenced the labour of writing these sermons, but never finished it. Some imperfect notes have been found since his death. They appear to belong to different discourses, and were evidently written at different times. Imperfect as they are, they open some interesting channels of investigation, and are therefore inserted in this collection.

For the general course of the author's reasoning, see his account of Lecture XI. in the summary of his lectures on the Socinian controversy, page 23 of this volume.—ED

Whether there is in the universe any being purely spiritual, any perfectly detached from matter, except the Great Supreme, is a question, perhaps, not easy to solve, nor is the solution of it at all essential to our present inquiry. God is a spirit, and we cannot conceive of any portion or modification of matter as entering into his essence, without being betrayed into contradiction and absurdity. In regard to every other class of being, it is by many conjectured that the thinking principle is united to some corporeal vehicle, through which it derives its perceptions, and by which it operates, while perfect spirituality, utterly separate from matter in any possible state, is the exclusive attribute of Deity. When angels are spoken of as spirits, this mode of expression may possibly denote no more than that the material vehicle with which they are united is of a nature highly subtile and refined, at a great remove from the flesh and blood which compose the bodily frame. Who will presume to set limits to the creative power in the organization of matter, or affirm that it is not, in the hand of its Author, susceptible of a refinement which shall completely exclude it from the notice of our senses? He who compares the subtilty and velocity of light with grosser substances which are found in the material system, will be reluctant to assign any bounds to the possible modifications of matter, much more to affirm there can be none beyond the comprehension of our corporeal organs.

However probable the supposition of the existence of creatures of a nature more exalted than our own, nothing can be affirmed with certainty on the subject beyond the dictates of revelation. In regard to a class of beings which are confessedly not objects of any of our senses, the evidence of their existence (if they exist at all) must be derived from Divine testimony. Abstract reasoning, however profound and accurate, presents nothing to the mind but the relations of its own ideas; while for our knowledge of what exists without us we are entirely indebted to observation and experiment. But neither observation nor experiment can extend to those departments of the universe that lie out of the reach of our senses. The province of philosophy, whether physical or mental, is to make an accurate survey of the mind and of matter, and to discover the laws to which they are subjected. To ascertain the laws of the material creation, the judicious inquirer not only diligently notices the appearances that present themselves, but puts the subject of his investigation into artificial situations, whence new appearances result; this mode of inquiry is styled experimental. In mental philosophy a different method must be adopted. Mind cannot, like matter, be divided, compounded, or decomposed, by subjecting it to the action of external agents; and consequently, there is here no room for experiment, properly so called. All that can be done is carefully to observe the processes of thought and of emotion, and by attending to the operation of our mental faculties to arrive at some general conclusions, the justice of which must, in every instance, be decided by individual consciousness.

This inconvenience, inseparable from all attempts to investigate the structure of the human mind, must, in my humble opinion, preclude

the possibility of much original discovery, and will, probably, prevent metaphysics from ever obtaining the certainty and stability of science. While investigating the laws of matter, we can vary the situations in which it is placed as much as we please [within certain practical limits,] and retain it as long under our view; but mental phenomena form a Proteus, which is continually changing its aspect, and the objects of our observation are continually gliding away from us. Yet, while we acknowledge the incompetency of reason to ascertain the existence of a class of creatures superior to ourselves, and that all we can arrive at is a probable conjecture, it should be remembered that reason is equally incompetent to determine the contrary. If it is unable to build, it is, on the very same account, unable to destroy; whatever improvement philosophy may receive, however successful and brilliant its career, its conclusions, in no instance, apply to an economy which, being confessedly supernatural, is beyond its sphere, and governed by laws totally different from those which it is its business to explore.

Were all the secrets of the material world laid open, and the whole structure of the human mind, with all the laws of thought, volition, and emotion perfectly developed and explained, we should not be a step nearer to a solution of the question under our present consideration, not at all more qualified to determine whether there be an order of superior intelligences, or what the station they occupied, or the faculties by which they were distinguished. In short, the utmost that philosophy can achieve is to make us acquainted with human creatures, and with some of the laws which govern the material and visible world. Whenever we extend our views beyond this, we have no *data* to proceed upon, [but] are all at once in the region of doubt and conjecture. It is a province to which the principles [of philosophy] cease to apply: ingenuity may amuse itself with endless suppositions, and fancy fill the void with splendid pictures, but as to discovery, the intellect of a Newton is upon the same level with that of a child.

It follows from hence, that the attempt to set aside the doctrine on this subject, derived from Scripture, under the notion of its being *unphilosophical*, is puerile and unmeaning. The truth is, that it is in no other sense unphilosophical, except that philosophy has nothing to do with it; that it implies supernatural economy, to which its principles are totally inapplicable, and which it can neither affirm nor deny. Here, if anywhere, we must have recourse "to the law and to the testimony;" if they speak not according to them, "there is no light in them."

Let me briefly advert, then, to the statements of the New Testament on this subject. I shall content myself with presenting the reader with a mere outline, without attempting to exhaust the information which they impart.

The New Testament informs us, that there is an order of intelligent beings superior to the human race, which it usually designates by the name of angels,—a name descriptive of their office rather than their nature; that they are endowed with very elevated powers and capacities;

that part of these, at a former [period,] swerved from their allegiance to the "blessed and only potentate," on which account they lost their first estate; that of these, one of pre-eminent rank and dignity took the lead in the revolt; that under the name of Satan he continues to rule the rest, who are styled his angels; that having established an infernal empire, he has ever been engaged in a malignant and implacable opposition to the will of God; that, envious of the happiness of our first parents, under the disguise of a serpent he tempted the woman to violate the Divine prohibition, by eating the forbidden fruit, whence we derived a corrupt and mortal nature; that the same evil spirit who is styled "the god of this world," the "prince of the power of the air," perpetually exerts himself in seducing men to sin; that he succeeded in effacing the knowledge of God, and establishing idolatry throughout the world; that Jesus Christ was appointed by his divine Father to be the antagonist of Satan, and to "destroy his works;" and that, before the close of time, his dominion will be established upon the ruin of that of Satan, and the world restored to happiness and to God. This, as it appears to me, is a fair outline of the doctrine of the New Testament on this mysterious subject. In a word, Christ and Satan are represented in the Scriptures as the heads of two opposite empires; the one the empire of light and holiness, the other of darkness and sin; the one embracing all the elements of moral good, the other all those of moral evil; while the whole human race are divided by their sway.

To a philosophical mind, not imbued with the light of revelation, such a view of the moral state of the world will, probably, appear strange and portentous: nothing is easier than to suggest plausible objections against it. It may be admitted that it is not such a representation as reason, left to itself, would have prompted us to anticipate. This is a circumstance, however, which, in judging of [such matters,] is entitled to little attention; whatever their previous improbability, they must be received or rejected according to the amount of evidence adduced for their support. Even in the affairs of ordinary life, our previous conceptions of improbability are found to afford no criterion of truth, much less can any reliance be placed on them in judging of the laws of a superior and supernatural economy.

In asserting the personality and agency of Satan, we are not, it should be remembered, proposing to our reader a speculation in philosophy; we are asserting a fact beyond the limits of its jurisdiction; a fact for which we profess to produce no other evidence besides the declarations of Scripture. If its testimony is not sufficient to decide the question, we are out at sea, nor is it possible to specify what doctrines we are warranted to receive on its authority; especially when we consider that to enlarge our knowledge of the invisible world would appear to be the proper business of a revelation, whose exclusive glory it is to bring "life and immortality to light." We have no controversy, at present, with those whose lax notions of inspiration imbolden them to reject the express testimony of an apostle. We assume, as granted, the truths of inspiration, so far, at least, that they

may be safely trusted in the annunciation of Christian doctrine; and all we shall attempt is, to establish that literal interpretation of their language on the subject under our present consideration, wherein we infer the personal existence and agency of Satan.

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There is no necessary alliance between moral rectitude and intellectual elevation; nor need we go far in search of high intellectual vigour combined in the same individual with a portentous degree of pravity. In free and voluntary agents, we learn, from constant observation, that the greatest range and comprehension of intellect is no security against obliquity of will; nor is it at all certain that a pre-eminent degree of mental superiority may not, under certain circumstances, become itself a source of temptation. Be this as it may, the only order of rational creatures with which our experience has brought us acquainted have, we are certain, fallen from rectitude; and therefore, whatever other conclusion we may draw from that fact, it ought, on the principles of analogy, to facilitate our belief, on proper evidence, that a similar catastrophe has involved a distinct and superior order. Whatever difficulties may accompany [the question of] the origin of evil, and however incompetent we may be to conceive how the transition is effected from innocence to guilt, or how to reconcile its foresight and permission with divine rectitude and human freedom, as this is not the place where *they* [these difficulties] first occur, they are not entitled to be considered as objections against the doctrine which we are endeavouring to support. They exist exactly to the same extent in relation to the fall of man, of which we have experimental evidence. The doctrine which affirms the existence of evil spirits of a superior order, who have sunk themselves into perdition by disobeying their Maker, is perfectly analogous to the history of the only species of rational creatures with which we are acquainted; we find its counterpart in ourselves.

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There is one objection which has been frequently urged against the popular view of this subject, which it will be proper to notice before we proceed further in the discussion, lest the prejudice it may [excite] should impair the conviction which the evidence might otherwise produce. It has been said, that to ascribe to Satan such an interference in the moral concerns of the world as is implied in his incessantly tempting men to sin, is to suppose him omnipresent, a supposition repugnant to the nature of a finite being. It must be confessed, the Scriptures of the New Testament teach us to conceive of satanic agency as concurring in almost every act of deliberate sin: he is said to have filled the heart of Ananias; to have entered into Judas, "after he had taken the sop;" and to be "the god of this world, who worketh mightily with the children of disobedience." To infer from thence, however, that any proper omnipresence is attributed to this apostate spirit betrays inattention to the obvious meaning of the inspired writers.

We are taught to conceive of Satan as the head of a spiritual empire of great extent, and comprehending within itself innumerable subordinate agents. The term Satan, in application to this subject, is invariably found in the singular number, implying that there is *one* designated by that appellation. His associates in the primeval rebellion are spoken of in the plural number, and are denominated his angels. Thus, the punishment reserved for them at the close of time is said to be "prepared for the devil and his angels." What their number may be it is in vain to conjecture; but when we reflect on the magnitude of the universe, and the extensive and complicated agency in which they are affirmed to be engaged, we shall probably be inclined to conjecture that it far exceeds that of the human race.

In describing the affairs of an empire it is the uniform custom of the historian to ascribe its achievements to one person, to the ruling mind under whose auspices they are performed, and by whose authority they are effected: as it is the will of the chief which, in absolute monarchies, gives unity to its operations and validity to its laws, and to whose glory or dishonour its good or ill fortune redound; as victories and defeats are ascribed to him who sustains the supreme power, without meaning for a moment to insinuate that they were the result of his individual agency. Thus, in relating the events of the last war, the ruler of France would be represented as conducting at once the most multifarious movements in the most remote parts of Europe, where nothing more was intended than that they were executed, directly or indirectly, by his order. He thus becomes identified with his empire, and spoken of as though he pervaded all its parts. Thus the sovereign of Great Britain, by fiction of speech perfectly understood, is represented as the direct object of every offence, and as present in every court of law, conscience, * * *

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Conceiving Satan, agreeable to the intimations of the word of God, to be the chief or head of a spiritual dominion, we easily account for the extent of the agency he is affirmed to exert, in tempting and seducing the human race; not by supposing him to be personally present wherever such an operation is carrying on, but by referring it to his auspices, and considering it as belonging to the history of his empire. As innumerable angels of light fight under the banners of the Redeemer, so, there is every reason to conclude, the devil also is assisted by an equally numerous host of his angels, composing those principalities and powers over which Jesus Christ triumphed, in the making "a show of them openly." On this principle, the objection we are considering falls entirely to the ground, and no more ubiquity or omnipresence is attributed to Satan by our system than to Alexander, Cæsar, or Tamerlane, whose power was felt, and their authority acknowledged, far beyond the limits of their personal presence.

The attentive reader of Scripture will not fail to remark, that the statement of the existence, the moral propensities, and the agency of Satan is extended nearly through the whole of the sacred volume

from Genesis to the Revelations; that its writers, in their portraiture of our great adversary, employ the same images, and adhere to the same appellations throughout; that a complete identity of character is exhibited, marked with the same features of force, cruelty, malignity, and fraud. He is everywhere depicted as alike the enemy of God and man; who, having appeared as a serpent in the history of the fall, is recognised by St. Paul under the same character, in express allusion to that event,* and afterward by St. John, in the Apocalypse, as "that old serpent the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world."†

We have, therefore, just the same evidence of the real personality of Satan, as of the Holy Spirit, and exactly of the same kind; both are described by inspired persons; to both, volitions, purposes, and personal [characteristics] are ascribed. A uniformity of representation, an identity of character, distinguished respectively by the most opposite moral qualities, equally pervade the statements of Scripture as to each, to such a degree, that supposing the sacred writers to have designed to teach us the proper personality of Satan, it is not easy to conceive what other language they could have adopted. Notwithstanding, however, this accumulation of evidence, there are those who contend that all that is said on this subject is figurative, and that the devil, or Satan, is a mere prosopopœia, or personification; but what it is designed to personify they are not agreed; some affirming one thing and some another, according to the caprices of their fancy, or the exigences of their system. The solution most generally adopted by our modern refiners in revelation is, that Satan is a figure or personification of the principle of evil. For the benefit of the illiterate part of my audience it may be proper to remark, that a personification is a figure of rhetoric or of poetry, by which we ascribe sentiment, language, and action to things which, properly speaking, are utterly incapable of these: for example, Job, in a lofty strain of poetry, inquiring where is the place of wisdom,—"Man," saith he, "knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. *The depth saith, It is not in me, and the sea saith, It is not with me. Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears.*"‡ In this bold personification of the *Depth*, the *Sea*, *Destruction*, and *Death*, there is grandeur and imagination, but no obscurity; every one perceives, that in bestowing sentiment and language on these natural objects, the writer merely obeys the impulse of poetic enthusiasm. St. Paul, on several occasions, makes use of the same figure, and personifies the Law, the Flesh, and other things of an abstract nature, and no one mistakes his meaning. The legitimate use of this figure is, to give vivacity and animation to the exhibition of sentiment; every sober writer employs it sparingly and occasionally, and will rarely, if ever, have recourse to it, until he has elevated the imagination of his reader to a pitch which prepares him to sympathize with the enthusiasm it betrays. A personification never dropped, nor ever explained

* 2 Cor. xi. 3. † Rev. xii. 9. ‡ Job xxviii. 12–14, 22,

by the admixture of literal forms of expression in the same connexion, is an anomaly, or rather absurdity, of which there is no example in the writings of men of sense. Of all the figures of speech by which language is varied and enriched, the personification is perhaps the most perspicuous; nor is there an instance to be found in the whole range of composition, sacred or profane, in which it was so employed as to make it doubtful whether the writer intended to be understood in a literal or figurative sense. Let those who deny the existence of Satan adduce, if they are able, another example from any author whatever, ancient or modern, sacred or profane, in which this figure is employed in a manner so enigmatical and obscure, as to have been interpreted for ages in a literal sense. There is a personification spreading itself through the whole Bible, if we believe these men, [now] discovered for the first time, in writings which have been studied by thousands, possessed of the most acute and accomplished intellect, for eighteen hundred years, without one of them, during all these ages, suspecting that it existed. It is scarcely necessary to say, that a more untenable position was never advanced; nor one which, if they really believe that the sacred writers meant to be understood figuratively, evinces a more unpardonable inattention to the operations of thought, and the laws of composition. On any other subject but religion, such a style of criticism could not fail to expose its authors to merited derision.

But let us, for a moment, waive the other objections to this solution, and, admitting it to be possible, examine how far it will answer its purpose, by applying it to some of the principal passages which treat of the agency of Satan. It is necessary to forewarn my hearers, that the devil, or Satan, according to the notion of our opponents, is by no means a personification, universally, of one and the same thing. It is a Proteus that assumes so many shapes as almost to elude detection. Most commonly, it denotes the principle of moral evil; sometimes, however, it stands for the heathen magistrates, sometimes for the Jewish priests and scribes, and at others for the personal opponent of St. Paul at Corinth.

Let us first apply this solution to our Lord's temptation in the wilderness. "Then," says Matthew, "was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil."* This, our opponents tell us with great confidence, was a visionary scene, and their reason for it is curious enough. It is the form of the expression, "Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness." Mark has it, "sendeth him into the wilderness."† On this principle of interpretation, whatever is represented as performed by Christ under the agency of the Spirit must be understood as visionary; and when it is said "he entered in the power of the Spirit into Galilee," it must be understood as intending, not a real, but a fictitious or visionary removal. It is true that Ezekiel speaks of himself as brought to Jerusalem, in order to witness the abominations practised there, while it is evident his actual abode was

* Matt. iv. 1. † Mark i. 12.

still in Babylon; but that no mistake may arise, he repeatedly assures us that it was in the visions of God. But no such intimation is given in the instance before us. It has all the appearance of a literal matter of fact, and as such it has been currently received by the church of God. Let it be admitted, however, for argument's sake, to have been a visionary representation; the question still recurs, What is meant by the tempter in this scene? and whether any of the solutions which have been given can possibly be admitted. The devil here cannot be intended to denote the pagan magistrates, or Jewish high-priests or scribes, because our Lord was alone. As little can it mean the principle of evil. The principle of evil must be the principle of some mind; it cannot subsist apart. Where, in this instance, is the mind in which it inhered? None were present but the Saviour and the tempter; if the tempter was not a person, but the principle of evil, that principle must have belonged to the Saviour himself; it must have consisted of some sinful bias, some corrupt propensity in himself, with which he maintained an arduous struggle. But this is refuted by the concurrent testimony of the sacred writers, who affirm him to be "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;"* who emphatically designate him under the character of him "that is holy, him that is true."† It is to be hoped that our modern Socinians have not rushed to that extreme of impiety to impute a principle of evil to the mind of the immaculate Lamb of God, "in whom was no sin."‡ And yet, without this, no intelligible account can be given of the temptation, except that which has been universally received in the church.

Let us apply their theory to another very important passage in the sixth chapter of the Ephesians. We there find the following exhortation: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not with flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." By these principalities and powers our modern Socinians tell us we are to understand a general personification of all wicked opposition to the progress of Christianity, whether from the civil or ecclesiastical power, and, in the present instance more particularly, "the opposition of Jewish priests and rulers."§ But how, we ask, is this comment consistent with the negative branch of St. Paul's assertion, "for we wrestle not with flesh and blood?" Flesh and blood is a very common form of expression in the sacred writings, employed to denote the human race, or mankind. Thus our Lord tells Peter, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven;"‖ evidently intending to affirm, that he did not derive his information from men, but from God. "Immediately," says Paul, "I consulted not with flesh and blood;"¶ that is, he consulted no human authorities; "nor did I go up to Jerusalem," he adds, "to those that were apostles before me." The first part of the apostle's proposition then evidently is, that the opposition he had chiefly to sustain was not

* Heb. vii. 26. † Rev. iii. 7. ‡ 1 John iii. 5.
§ Improved Version, p. 450. ‖ Matt. xvi. 17. ¶ Gal. i. 16

from men, nor from adversaries of the human rank and order. The question naturally arises, From what then? He adds, "From principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world," or, according to Griesbach, "of this darkness;" that is, say the Unitarians, from Jewish rulers and priests. We must perceive in a moment the absurdity of the proposition thus interpreted, where that is denied at the beginning which is affirmed at the close; and human nature, expressed by a general term which can signify nothing else, is formally excluded from the context, to make way for a class of adversaries who are of that very nature, and no other.

It is equally impossible to put the other construction on the passage, that of the principle of evil; because that cannot admit of the plural number. It will surely be allowed, that no intelligent writer, who was desirous of personifying the principle of evil, abstractedly considered, would speak of it in the plural form, under the figure of "principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world," since such a mode of speaking could be productive of nothing but mental confusion. This passage, therefore, affords an irrefragable proof of the existence and agency of Satan.

Let us proceed to apply the principle of our opponents to another passage, and inquire whether it be possible to elicit from it a sense worthy of the wisdom of inspiration. The passage to which I refer is in the first Epistle of John, the third chapter: "My little children, let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous: he who committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil hath sinned from the beginning: for this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." Let us for a moment suppose, with the Unitarians, that the devil is here put for a personification of the principle of evil, or of sin. And what, let me ask, can be more trite, futile, and ridiculous, than gravely to assert that the principle of evil, or sin, sinned from the beginning? Who needed to be informed of this? and what sense can we affix to the phrase, "from the beginning?" which, if it conveys any idea at all, must be intended to instruct us, that the principle of sin did not begin to be sinful from a late or recent, but from a certain very distant epoch, denoted by the words, "the beginning." But is not this more like the babbling of an infant, than the dictates of divine inspiration?

The following passage of John is [beset] with precisely the same difficulties. "Ye," said our Lord, addressing the unbelieving Jews, "are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it."* Here, on the hypothesis of our opponents, we find our Saviour labouring to convince his hearers that the principle of evil, or sin, has been guilty of certain specific enormities, such as murder and lying; that it did not continue in a state of moral rectitude, because there is no rectitude in it Nothing can be more trifling, since, when

* John viii 44

the very principle of evil in the abstract is under contemplation, every partial kind of evil is, *ipso facto*, included. Had our Lord discoursed in this manner, it might very properly have been said of him, in a sense very different from that which was originally intended, "never man spake like this man."

The legitimate employment of a prosopopœia, or personification, requires that the literal term, expressive of the passion or principle personified, be strictly adhered to. He who wishes to personify piety, patriotism, or benevolence is never accustomed to drop the literal term by which these principles are respectively denoted. He gives sex, sentiment, and language to each, but on no occasion shall we find him substituting an unusual name for the things which he intends to personify. To change the very terms themselves for certain symbolical appellations would have the effect of involving his discourse in incomprehensible mystery: it would be introducing an enigma, not a personification. Where shall we find a parallel in the whole compass of the Bible for such a licentious abuse of personification? Besides, allowing that this absurd kind of personification could be at all tolerated, the symbolical name ought, at least, to have a determinate meaning; it should invariably stand for one and the same thing. The change of the proper term for the name of a symbolical personage could be justified on no other principle than that it was universally understood to be the substitute of some one object; but in the present case, the word Satan has no precise or definite idea attached to it; it is sometimes the principle of evil, sometimes the Jewish priests and rulers, at others the pagan magistrates. How [repugnant to every sound principle of interpretation!]

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## VIII.

## ON THE EXTREME CORRUPTION OF MANKIND BEFORE THE GENERAL DELUGE.

GEN. vi. 11.—*The earth was corrupt before God, and was filled with violence.*

THE account in the Scriptures of the history of the world before [the flood] is extremely concise, but at the same time extremely interesting. Of the celebrated personages that then flourished, the names are seldom mentioned, and the transactions in which they were engaged are not specified with any detail of circumstances. The inhabitants of the old world are involved in [obscurity]; they are made to pass before us like the shade of departed greatness, with an infallible judgment only passed by their Creator on their characters, and a distant declaration of their doom: as though it were the deter-

mination of God's providence to bury their memory in oblivion, and to make nothing distinctly legible but their destruction. Of the violences they committed, of the impiety they uttered, and of the miseries they mutually inflicted upon each other, the Holy Ghost condescends to give no particulars, but only stigmatizes them as atrocious criminals and rebels, whose enormous guilt exhausted the patience of their Maker, and rendered them unfit to live.

The same history informs us of a most atrocious murder committed by the first-born man upon his brother, for no other reason than that he was wicked and his brother righteous. Such an event affords a view of human nature, in the early stage of its existence, which prepares us for the description given of human depravity in the context, "and the Lord looked, and beheld that every thought of the imagination of man's heart was evil, and that continually."* It was necessary explicitly to state the extreme degeneracy into which mankind were fallen, in order to justify the conduct of God in bringing upon them the flood. For God to destroy the work of his hand,—to destroy that part of it which was made after his own image, was a most extraordinary measure in the conduct of Providence, which nothing can account for but that extreme corruption which it is affirmed then overspread the world. In what that corruption particularly consisted; whether it involved the apostatizing from God to idols, or only manifested itself in gross acts of immorality; how long it had been accumulating ere it reached its height; and whether it was gradually or by sudden steps introduced; are circumstances of which we are not informed. All that we are expressly told is, that the earth was filled with injustice, rapine, and violence. From what we know of human nature and human affairs, we have reason to conclude that it was gradually superinduced, since great changes in the moral state of the world, whether in the way of improvement or deterioration, require a considerable space of time for their accomplishment. It is on this account next to impossible not to suppose that the extreme degradation of manners under consideration was produced by slow degrees, and was effected by various causes. Some of these causes are, if I mistake not, suggested with tolerable clearness in the chapter out of which my text is taken.

We might with great truth assert, that the general cause of the extreme corruption then prevalent was the defection of our first parents, and that consequent loss of true rectitude and holiness which they first sustained in their own persons, and then communicated to their posterity. This tendency to sin in human nature is, indeed, the prolific source of all particular vices, which flow from thence as their fountain. But as a river when it overflows its banks must be swelled by accelerated floods or tributary streams, besides what it derives from its parent stream, so an extraordinary prevalence of vice at a particular time necessarily implies the co-operation of other causes, along with the original corruption of human nature. To say there is an inherent

* Gen. vi. 5.

sinful bias in human nature is sufficient to account for the existence of a large portion of corruption at any time, but affords no reason for its prevailing at one time more than another. To account for such an event satisfactorily some specific and particular reasons must be assigned besides this general one.

The purport of the remaining part of this discourse is to point out what may appear some of the probable reasons, and to deduce a few practical inferences from the whole.

Let me request your attention while I state some of the particular reasons which account for the remarkable and prodigious corruption which prevailed in the lives of men immediately before the flood.

I. It may be partly ascribed, with great probability, to the neglect and abandonment of the public worship of God. From the fact of Cain and Abel both presenting their offerings to the Lord, and from the acceptance of Abel's offering, because offered with faith, we may infer, that some time after the fall a mode of worshipping God was divinely prescribed, or how could Abel exercise faith in sacrificing; since faith implies invariably a divine testimony, or some divine interposition? We are further informed respecting Cain, that when the Lord remonstrated with him on the murder of his brother, he sentenced him to be a wanderer and vagabond; and Cain, deploring the severity of his sentence, said, "Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid." It is added, "And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden."*

As his going out from the presence of the Lord is immediately followed by the declaration of his dwelling in a strange land, it is natural to suppose that the former expression denotes his quitting that country which God was *wont* in a peculiar manner to honour with his presence; where he afforded some spiritual manifestation of his power and glory.

It seems, in or near the place where Adam and his sons dwelt there was placed the shadow, or some bright and visible token, of the Divine presence. The same is implied in the acceptance of Abel's sacrifice, and the rejection of Cain's; for how could the former know that his was accepted, or the latter that his was rejected, without some supernatural sign or token? Cain, thus having by the atrocious crime he committed forfeited the privilege of approaching the place of Divine audience, and going into a remote part where no such symbol of the Divine presence was possessed, fell in all probability into total neglect of the public worship of God, and abandoned himself entirely to an irreligious and worldly life. Supposing this to be the case, it will readily account for much of that prodigious vice and impiety: for when once the worship of God is abandoned, a great restraint upon wickedness is removed out of the way. Conceive only to what a dreadful degeneracy of morals would this nation speedily advance, if no attention were paid to the Sabbath, and public worship universally abandoned. The extreme importance of this duty as a chief preservative of all

* Gen. iv. 14–16.

religion and virtue may be learned from one remarkable passage in the writings of Paul: "Forget not the assembling of yourselves together," says he, "as the manner of some is:" "for if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin."* Whence we may infer, that to forsake public worship is either precisely the same thing as absolute apostacy or is the very next step to it.

II. The intermarriages between the "seed of the righteous and the seed of the wicked" were undoubtedly another principal cause of the extreme corruption under consideration. "And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and they took them wives of all that they chose."† To understand the meaning of this passage, which at first sight appears obscure, we must look a little further back in the narrative. We are there informed that to Seth, the third son of Adam, was born a son named Enos; it is added, "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord."‡ The meaning of the inspired writer is, that in the days of Enos, the son of Seth, the first separation was made between the true worshippers of God and the profane descendants of Cain and his associates. Adam, we learn, had sons and daughters born to him after the birth of Seth; but their names are not mentioned, partly because the true religion was preserved in the line of Seth, and partly because from him was continued the succession of patriarchs till Noah. The family of Seth, on account of its adherence to the true religion, were styled "the sons of God;" the descendants of Cain, and the other branches of the family who united with him in his impiety, "the sons of men," denoting that they were a carnal, irreligious race. The words rendered, "then began men to call upon the name of the Lord," may with equal propriety be rendered, "then began men to be called by the name of the Lord." Those then were the persons whom the sacred writer denominates "the sons of God;" a race of men descended from Seth, who kept themselves apart, and refused affinity or connexion with the apostates from the religious worship of God. Among them was found the true church; the holy seed, whence the New World was to spring up after the flood; the sacred stock out of which Christ himself was to arise.

While they kept themselves apart, and declined to unite with the apostate stock, religion continued in its purity, the overflowings of vice were restrained, and they were as "the salt of the earth." In process of time they yielded to the suggestions of carnal appetite, broke through the restraints of piety and prudence, and joined in affinity with the descendants of Cain and the other branches of the family who followed his apostacy. Tracing the almost necessary effects of such a proceeding, the children of Israel at a subsequent period were strictly forbidden to contract marriages with the Canaanitish and surrounding nations. "Take heed to thyself lest thou make a covenant with the

* Heb. x. 25. † Gen. vi. 1, 2. ‡ Gen. iv. 26

inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee:—and thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods."* In the same spirit, and for the same reason, the apostle enjoins upon Christians the avoiding of such unequal marriages: "Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath Christ with Belial? or what communion hath light with darkness? or what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?"†

III. The pride arising from the possession of great bodily strength, and great mental acquisitions and endowments, may be assigned as another cause of the remarkable corruption of men's manners in the times immediately preceding the flood. "There were giants in those days," says the sacred text; "and, moreover, when the sons of God, allying themselves to the daughters of men, had children born unto them, the same became mighty men, even men of renown."‡ The consciousness of superior or supernatural strength in persons who are not tinctured with the fear of God, naturally disposes to a degree of violence and oppression; and that those giants of whom Moses spoke, abused their prodigious strength to those purposes *is evidently* [implied] in the sacred story. The strong oppressed the weak, and made the superiority of bodily force an instrument for establishing unjust domination and tyranny, until the whole earth became a scene of rapine, cruelty, and injustice.

But besides these, it is evident from the narrative that the descendants of Cain distinguished themselves very early by the discovery and cultivation of arts and sciences; both these took their first rise among that godless race. Tubal Cain instructed in every artifice of iron and brass, and, probably, was the inventor of warlike instruments. Jubal was the inventor of musical instruments, or, to speak in the language of Scripture, "the father of all them that handled the harp and the organ." Naamah, from the manner in which she is introduced, was probably the inventress of some [perhaps] of the more exquisite kinds of needlework. The first thing, we are informed of respecting Cain, after the murder of his brother, is, his building a city, which he called Enoch, after the name of his son. From the whole narrative it may be confidently inferred, that the descendants of Cain were endowed with a superior genius, and were the first who made themselves celebrated by the discovery and improvements of arts and sciences. Superior genius, united with extraordinary attainments, are, in themselves, valuable gifts; but when they are dissevered from the fear of God, nothing tends more powerfully to intoxicate and corrupt the heart. These envenom it with pride, these supply the sophistry which supports impiety, and extend the means and enlarge the capacity of doing mischief. They have a peculiar tendency to produce that confidence in human reason, that reliance on arms of flesh, which indisposes man to seek after God. "The wicked, through

* Exod. xxxiv. 12, 16 † 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15. ‡ Gen. vi. 4.

the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God."* From the history of modern times, we have abundant evidence that great improvements in arts and sciences have not only no harmonizing or beneficial influence on irreligious minds, but that they have just the contrary. Whenever God is not made the final end of all knowledge and of all talent, they lead the possessor farther and farther from him, and are the mere instruments and embellishments of vice, and serve merely to paint and adorn the sepulchre where virtue lies entombed. The descendants of Cain, like too many in the present day, were, indeed, men o renown; but seeking this as the supreme good, and despising the honour that comes from above, they could possess no solid worth, and whatever there was that might bear the appearance of it among them was hollow and insincere.

IV. I add, in the last place, their extraordinary longevity as another reason of the prodigious depravity which prevailed at that time. The lives of many of them, we learn, extended to nearly a thousand years. This remarkable circumstance, co-operating with the causes I have already mentioned, contributed greatly to the excessive corruption asserted in the text. It must have acted powerfully in several ways.

1. He who can indulge a reasonable expectation of living for a very long period in the world, considers himself as possessing a large estate. The value of any earthly possession rises, partly in proportion to the satisfaction it is capable of affording, and partly from its duration. Man, being naturally a prospective being, a being who looks forward to futurity, is necessarily more attached to every species of good in proportion to its real or imagined permanence. How powerfully, then, must sensible and visible objects have attracted the heart of those who had a reasonable prospect of enjoying them for a thousand years! The possessions which attach us to the present world must have operated, in such circumstances, with a prodigious force.

2. Corrupt habits must, through such a long track of years, have had opportunity to fix themselves more thoroughly, to strike their roots more deeply, than during the contracted space of present existence.

3. The longevity of the antediluvians removed eternity to a greater apparent distance, and therefore naturally weakened its effects. If men put off the thoughts of death and eternity when they have such a short space to live as they have at present, how difficult would it be to impress [them] with a serious or alarming apprehension of it at the distance of a thousand years!

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* Psalm x. 4.

# IX.

## ON THE END OF MAN'S EXISTENCE.

EZEK. XV. 2.—*What is the vine-tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?*

THE vine-tree is weaker than most trees, so as to be unfit for any work, and would therefore be very contemptible but for that property it possesses of bringing forth a valuable and delicious fruit. On this account it is highly prized and diligently cultivated. But if it fail of producing fruit, the only purpose to which it can be applied is to turn it to fuel. Such is the figurative representation which the prophet gives us, in this passage, of man, considered especially as the object of Divine care and culture. He is naturally capable of yielding a precious fruit; in this consists his sole excellence; this is the sole end of his existence; and if he fails in this, he is of no use but to be destroyed.

I. Man is naturally capable of yielding a most precious fruit: this fruit consists in living to God.

1. He is possessed of all the natural powers which are requisite for that purpose. He is endowed with reason and understanding, enabling him to perceive the proofs of the being of God, and to entertain just, though inadequate conceptions of the principal attributes of his nature; his self-existence, his absolute perfection, his power, his wisdom, his all-sufficiency, his omnipresence, his holiness, justice, and goodness. Inferior animals do not: on which account he is a vine-tree among the trees of the wood; inferior in many properties to some of them, but superior in those particulars which fit him for this end, and on that account incomparably more valuable.

2. As we are possessed of natural powers, fitting us for the service of God, so he has bestowed upon us much care and culture, with an express view to this end. The religious instruction he gave to his ancient people is frequently compared in Scripture to the cultivation which men bestow upon vines. "My beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill," &c.* "For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant."† He gave them his will, his ordinances, his prophets, and separated them from all nations by peculiar rites, that they might be to him for a name, and a praise, and a peculiar treasure, above all nations. He has done much more for us under the gospel. None can be ignorant of the intention of God in all these provisions. "Yet I had planted thee

* Isaiah v. 1 † Isaiah v. 7.

a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou now turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?"*

II. This is the only end for which mankind are formed and preserved; this is the proper fruit of human nature, which admits of nothing being substituted in its room.

1. A mere selfish, voluptuous life cannot be supposed to be the proper fruit of human nature. He who lives to himself is universally despised and condemned. "Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth to himself."† "For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah; their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter."‡

2. A life of social benevolence, in which the public good is preserved, without a supreme regard to God, cannot be this fruit. Can such persons be said to neglect the end of their existence? Undoubtedly; for the following reasons:

(1.) To do good to our fellow-creatures without regard to God is to forget the principal relation in which we stand, and consequently to neglect the principal duty. A right behaviour to each other is no proper compensation for the want of obedient regards to God (instanced in pirates and rebels). A regard to God is the root and origin of all real virtue.

(2.) The end of man's existence cannot with any propriety be considered as confined to this world; but the proper end accomplished by social virtues is entirely confined to the present state.

(3.) No collective number of men can be independent of God, more than a single individual; therefore no such collective body has a right to consult their common interest to the neglect of God, any more than a single individual to pursue his individual interest. The aggregate of mankind appears something great and imposing in the eyes of men; in consequence of which a peculiar importance is attached to those actions which tend to the public good. The magnitude of the general interest imposes a value on those actions which are adapted to advance so great an object. But in the sight of God, all nations are as the "drop of a bucket;" "he taketh up the isles as a very little thing." Suppose all the subjects of a lawful prince were to agree to stand by each other, and to promote each other's interest to the utmost; would this be allowed by the prince as any atonement for a great and persevering rebellion? Or suppose a single individual so disposed, would not the result be the same? No other can be substituted for this.

III. He who answers not the end of his existence is fit only to be destroyed. He is like a vessel marred in the hand of the potter, proper only to be broken.

The barren vine may be useful as fuel, and to this purpose it is much applied in eastern countries. Thus wicked men may be useful with a subordinate kind of usefulness, by their destruction.

1. They may thereby become edifying examples of the just vengeance of God, in order to deter others. That this will be one of the ends answered by the punishment of the wicked seems intimated in several

* Jer. ii. 21. † Hos. x. 1. ‡ Deut. xxxii. 32.

passages of Scripture, as well as is supported by its analogy to human government. "And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh."*

2. They will serve to manifest those attributes of the Great Supreme which their conduct disowned, and which it seemed virtually to call in question. "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?"† This is a subordinate use, not a primary end. It is that which men fit themselves for by their presumptuous and impenitent neglect of God.

(1.) What blindness attaches to those who live in the total neglect of God and religion!

(2.) What little room is there for that confidence which many place in the correctness of deportment towards their fellow-creatures, while religion is not even pretended to be the governing principle of their lives!

(3.) What need have we all to examine ourselves, and seriously to inquire whether we are yielding that fruit unto God on which we have been insisting!

(4.) How ought those to be alarmed when the result of such examination is, that they have been hitherto utterly without fruit! How strong the obligations on such, after considering their ways, to turn unto the Lord! And thankful should they be that space is afforded them for repentance and salvation.‡

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## X.

### CLAIMS OF THE FLESH.

ROM. viii. 12.—*Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.*

IT is of great importance for us to ascertain, not only the quality of particular actions, but the general principle on which our life is regulated, since it is this that must determine our true character in the sight of God. As there are but two sorts of persons in the world, the righteous and the wicked, the carnal and the spiritual, so there are only two grand principles which respectively actuate these two classes of mankind, and produce all that diversity of character by which they are distinguished. In the context they are characterized with such perspicuity and precision, that it is not difficult to decide to which we belong. The one are described as enslaved, the other as free; the one as being in the flesh, and "minding" the things of it; the other as

* Isaiah lxvi 24. † Rom. ix. 22.
‡ Preached on the morning of Sunday, October 31, 1814, at Leicester

inhabited and actuated by the Spirit: the former as the heirs of death, the latter as the joint-heirs with the Lord of a happy immortality. The text we have chosen for our present meditation is a legitimate inference deduced by the inspired writer from the premises he had been laying down; it is a conclusion at which he arrives, resulting from the views which he had been exhibiting of the condition and expectation of two opposite descriptions of persons. "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh."

I shall endeavour, in the first place, to settle the meaning of the terms *flesh* and *Spirit*, employed in the context, in order to a right conception of the import of the proposition; and in the second place, compare and adjust the opposite claims of the flesh and of the Spirit.

1. Flesh most properly denotes the *body*, in contradistinction from the soul; the matter of which the corporeal structure is formed: "there is one flesh of men."* And,

2. As all men are possessed of this, it is by an easy figure of speech applied to denote human nature, or mankind universally. "The end of all flesh is come before God."†

3. Because the fleshly or corporeal part of our nature may be perceived by the eye, it is sometimes used to denote *that* in religion which is merely outward and ceremonial. Thus St. Paul says, "Having begun in the Spirit, are ye made perfect by the flesh?"‡ Thus the same apostle speaks of "carnal ordinances."§

4. On account of the deep and universal corruption of human nature, and this corruption displaying itself in a peculiar manner, in producing an addictedness to the indulgence of bodily or fleshly appetites, the term flesh is frequently used to denote moral corruption, or human nature considered as corrupt. It is manifest, from the consideration of the context, that this is the sense in which it is to be taken here. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh;"‖ that is, corrupt and sinful. In this sense of it, the works of the flesh are contrasted by St. Paul with the fruits of the Spirit. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like."¶ From the extent of the enumeration, which comprehends many mental vices, it is manifest nothing less can be intended by the term *flesh* than the principle of corruption, the dictates of unrenewed nature. By the *Spirit*, it is plain we are not to understand the immaterial principle in man, but the blessed Spirit of God, the author of all holiness. This is evident from the context.

*Secondly.* As they divide mankind between them, and every man walks according to the dictates of the one or the other, they are considered as competitors. We shall examine and adjust their respective claims, that we may discern to which the preference is due, and come then fully to acquiesce in the decision of the apostle: "Therefore we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh."

* 1 Cor. xv. 39. † Gen. vi. 13. ‡ Gal. iii. 3.
§ Heb. ix. 10. ‖ John iii. 6. ¶ Gal. v. 19–21

There is an ellipsis in the text, which must be supplied from the train of thought in the context.

Let us examine the claims of the flesh, or of corrupt nature.

We may conceive the flesh pleading ancient possession. The pleasures and freedom from restraint attending a compliance with her dictates. The general usage and course of the world, which she reminds us has been such in every age. That the far greater part of mankind have been under her sway, the greatest of men not excepted, so that she can number nobles among her vassals, and among her subjects the princes of the earth. The most distinguished by their birth, their talents, or their fortune, she may allege, never dreamed of an exemption from her dominion, never thought of any other method of life than that of living after the *flesh*: faithful to her dictates through the whole of their lives, they bowed submissive at her shrine, were initiated into her mysteries, and died in her communion. Notwithstanding these specious pleas, however, we shall see sufficient cause to decline her yoke, and to come to the apostolic conclusion, if we take the following things into our consideration.

I. Its claims are founded upon usurpation; they rest on no basis of equity. It alienates the property from its lawful possessor; it interferes with a prior claim which nothing can fairly defeat. Sin, considered as a master, does not enter upon a property that is derelict or abandoned by its owner; but it attempts to occupy and appropriate what the proprietor never meant to resign, what he never can resign without irreparable injury to his honour. The souls of men are the most valuable part of his possessions below, and the most capable, indeed in one sense they alone are capable, of glorifying his perfections.

1. Let us consider that the Lord is our Maker, and we the work of his hands; it is "he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein."* The noble powers by which we are so highly distinguished from the inferior parts of the creation, the powers of thought and reason and conscience, are of his production; from him they are derived, and by him they are sustained. His right in us is consequently more extensive than it is possible for us to conceive in any other instance, because none else ever gave existence to the smallest particle of dust in the balance; it is incomparably more than that, to which it is compared, of the potter over the clay. Whatever claim interferes, then, with his dominion over us, must be founded in absolute injustice, without the guilt of which it is impossible to withhold any thing from him; and it is injustice of the worst description, for it is robbing God. "Will a man rob God?" exclaims the prophet: "yet ye have robbed me, saith the Lord, in tithes and offerings."† But what are tithes and offerings compared to that love, adoration, and obe dience in which, even while they were enjoined, all their value consisted, and which are of perpetual obligation when they cease any longer to be enjoined? Nor does the dominion of God rest only on

* Isaiah xlii. 5 † Mal. iii. 8.

his power as a Creator; it claims our submission also on the ground of those transcendent perfections and excellences which belong essentially to the blessed God, and the exercise of which is inseparable from his administration. By virtue of these he is the sovereign good, the only good; for, strictly speaking, "there is none good but God:" the infinite, the absolute, the unchanging, the satisfying, the all-comprehending good; so that whatever appears beautiful or glorious among the creatures is but an efflux from his fulness, the faint reflection of his glory.

2. If we reflect on the powers with which we are endued, we cannot suppose that they are formed for no other end than the indulgence of carnal appetites, the amassing of riches, the enjoyment of sensual pleasures, or the procuring honours and distinctions from our fellow-worms. We shall be at no loss to perceive a strange disproportion between such powers and such pursuits, and that they cannot be confined to them without descending unspeakably beneath our level, without a base forgetfulness of ourselves as well as God, and a voluntary dereliction of our rank. Jeremiah, when he witnessed the ruin and desolation of his country, beheld with astonishment those that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills; a deplorable, but an involuntary degradation. But this we are now speaking of is chosen and voluntary; these dunghills, for such are the highest forms of created good when compared with the blessed God, are embraced with appetite and desire.

3. If God were disposed to relinquish his claim, the usurpation of another master might be yielded to with the more plausible pretence: but this is not the case. If we believe his word, he never means to part with his right over his creatures. "If I am a father, where is my reverence? if I am a master, where is my fear?"* We cannot suppose, without the utmost absurdity, he will ever divest himself of his authority, which he could never do without impairing his dignity, and introducing confusion into his empire. He owes it to himself not to relinquish what we owe to him. The claims of the flesh then are founded on plain and direct usurpation.

II. Let us next examine the claims of the flesh by what we have already derived from it. Let us see whether it is such a master as deserves to be served any longer. Of the boasted pleasures it has afforded, say, Christians, what remains but a painful and humiliating remembrance? "What fruit had ye in those things of which ye are now ashamed?" Has any thing accrued to you from the service of sin which you would wish to renew? Though it might flatter your imagination with the appearance of good, did it not afterward "bite as a serpent and sting as an adder?" You remember the wormwood and the gall you were made to taste when you were first convinced of its evil, and you know what a bitter and evil thing it is to depart from the living God. It has already brought you to the brink of destruction; it has placed you in a situation in which nothing but the interposition of sovereign Mercy could have saved you. By estranging you from

* Mal. i. 6.

God, it shut up the path to real good. In your unconverted state it indisposed you to prayer, armed you with prejudice against the salutary truths of the gospel, darkened your understanding, and seared your conscience. Such was its deceitfulness, that you were led by it to put "evil for good, and good for evil; sweet for bitter, and bitter for sweet." Your ears were closed to the voice of the charmer, charmed he never so wisely. You were made to fancy that true religion was melancholy, that tenderness of conscience was needless scrupulosity, and that happiness was only to be found in the pleasures and pursuits of this world. It engaged you in the chase of innumerable vanities. You "followed after your lovers, but could not overtake them;" fled from one refuge to another, till, to speak in the language of the prophet, "You were wearied in the multitude of your way." In the mean time, to all pleasant and delightful intercourse with the Father of Spirits, to the soothing accents of peace and pardon issuing from Christ, and to all the consolations of piety, you were utter strangers. In your more serious and reflecting moments, your heart meditated terror; death, judgment, and eternity were awful sounds in your ears, and you only felt a delusive and sickly repose, while you forgot they had any existence. On a calm review of your conduct, you felt an uneasiness which you were conscious was so just and well founded that you seldom dared to reflect. Surely you will acknowledge that you at least are not debtors to the flesh. And what has the flesh to plead for its services which will bear for a moment to be weighed against these great evils? What has Satan to plead, who by means of it "rules in the children of disobedience?" Will he venture to mention a few vain and sinful amusements, a wanton arbitrary liberty, or a few transient guilty pleasures, which I trust you are so far from wishing to repeat, that you never think of them without blushing before God? How are you more indebted to the flesh, since you had reason to hope you formed a saving acquaintance with God? The partial indulgence to its dictates has robbed you of your comfort, has retarded your progress to heaven, and made you pass many a day sad and disconsolate, when but for this the joy of the Lord would have been your strength.

The more we observe what passes around us with a serious mind, the more we shall be convinced how little men are indebted to the flesh. Look at that young man, the early victim of lewdness and intemperance, who, though in the bloom of life, has "his bones filled with the sins of his youth." Survey his emaciated cheek, his infirm and withered frame, and his eyes sunk and devoid of lustre; the picture of misery and dejection. Hear his complaint, how he mourns at the last, now his flesh and his body are consumed: "How have I hated instruction and my heart despised reproof, and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to them that instructed me! —I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation of the assembly." Is he a debtor to the flesh? Behold that votary of the world, successful as he has been in the pursuit of it, and stained by no flagrant crime. Yet he has lived "without God in the world;" and now his days are drawing to a close, he feels himself verging to

the grave, and no hope animates, no pleasing reflection cheers him. The only consolation he receives, or rather the only relief of his anguish, is in grasping the treasures he must shortly quit. Is he a debtor to the flesh?

III. We shall examine the claims of the flesh by the aspect they bear on our future interests. Before we engage in the service of a master, it is reasonable to inquire into the advantages he stipulates, and the prospects of futurity attendant upon his service. In the ordinary concerns of life, we should consider the neglect of such an inquiry chargeable with the highest imprudence. Dreadful is it, in this view, to reflect on the consequences inseparably annexed to the service of corruption. "If ye live after the flesh," says the apostle, "ye shall die."* "The wages of sin is death."† And to demonstrate the close and unavoidable connexion subsisting between them he adds, "If ye sow to the flesh, ye shall of the flesh reap corruption."‡ It is not an incidental connexion, it is an indissoluble one, fixed in the constitution of things. "Lust, when it is conceived, bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."§ If we live in the indulgence of carnal appetites, if we comply habitually with the dictates of corrupt nature, the word of God has assured us of what will follow: "The end of these things is death."‖ "Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God on the children of disobedience."¶ "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap."** For this reason we can never be debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh; the very reason assigned in the clause immediately following the text. We can never be under obligations to obey such a master, who rewards his services with death,—death spiritual and eternal. The fruits of sin, when brought to maturity, are corruption: his most finished production is death,—and the materials on which he works the fabric of that manufacture, if we may be allowed so to speak, consist in the elements of damnation. To such a master we can owe nothing but a decided rejection of his offers, a perpetual abhorrence, and an awful fear of ever being deceived by his stratagems, or entangled in his snares.

* Rom. viii. 13. † Rom. vi. 23. ‡ Gal. vi. 8. § James i 15.
‖ Rom. vi. 21. ¶ Ephes. v. 6 ** Gal. vi. 7

## XI.

## ON THE CAUSE, AGENT, AND PURPOSE OF REGENERATION.

JAMES i. 18.—*Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.*

IN this chapter the apostle endeavours to fortify the minds of the professors of Christianity, under the various trials and persecutions to which their religion exposed them, by assuring them of the happy fruits, in their spiritual improvement, they might expect to reap from them here, and the more abundant reward which awaited them hereafter. "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience."*

Lest any might be induced to relax in their vigilance, under an idea that the circumstances of their trial were too arduous, and that if they shrunk in the combat they might excuse themselves from the consideration of its being disproportioned to their strength, and that they were therefore, in fact, tempted of God, he takes pains to repel this insinuation, and to show that the success of any temptation whatever is solely to be imputed to the unbridled corruption of the human heart. It is, he tells us, "when a man is drawn away by his own heart's lust, and enticed," that he is "tempted;"† this sinful corruption has its origin in his own heart only; nor is in the smallest degree to be imputed to God, as though he impelled to it by a direct agency, or so ordered things, in the course of his providence, as to render it unavoidable. The sum of his doctrine on this head appears to be this, that all evil is from ourselves, and from the disordered state of our hearts, on which temptation operates; while, on the contrary, all moral and spiritual good is from God, and "cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."‡ The communications of grace are emphatically denominated "good and perfect gifts," by way of asserting their immeasurable superiority to the blessings which relate to the present life; and of these gifts St. James affirms, that every one of them "is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." Their origin is truly celestial: they are not capable of being communicated, like the good things of this life, by one human being to another; they are, strictly speaking, divine donations, which can only proceed from above. As a further illustration of the proposition he had been laying down, he introduces the words of the text: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." These words instruct us in the cause, the instrument, and the end of the renovation of Christians.

I. The cause is "the will" of God;—God operating by a free and spontaneous agency. His grace imparted in regeneration must be

* James i. 2, 3. † James i. 14. ‡ James i. 17.

acknowledged to be grace the most free and unmixed, the fruit of his sovereign will, in opposition to any necessity of nature to which it may be ascribed: for though the nature of his agency cannot but be consonant to his character, though the fruit of his Spirit cannot but be most pure and holy, yet he was under no necessity to interpose at all. That the effect of his special operation on the hearts of the faithful should be sanctifying is unavoidable; but his operating at all by his Spirit in the restoration of a fallen creature is to be ascribed solely to "his own good pleasure."*

It is of his own will, as opposed, not only to a necessity of nature in him, but to any claim of merit in the subject of this his gracious agency. No previous worthiness of ours, no attractive excellence in us, engaged his attention, or induced him to exert his power in our renovation: for whence could this arise in a creature so fallen and corrupt as to need so thorough a renovation? Or how, since "every good and perfect gift cometh from above," can it be supposed to subsist previous to, or apart from, his donation? In the context the apostle has been strongly insisting on it, that the beginning of all moral evil is to be ascribed to man; the beginning of all good to the Supreme Being; and it is in supporting this assertion he introduces the words of the text, "Of his own will begat he us."

No signs of virtuous and laudable conduct had ensued to procure the communication of divine grace, agreeable to what another apostle observes in his epistle to Titus: "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost."†

The production and maintenance of religion is styled, by the same writer, "the good pleasure of his will."‡

II. The instrument of this renovation is "the word of truth." In infusing the principle of divine life into the soul, God is wont to employ the gospel as the instrument, styled, with the utmost propriety, "the word of truth:" not only on account of the infallible truth and certainty of all its declarations, but on account of its high dignity and excellence, as a revelation from God, it is "the truth;" to which whatever is contrary is imposture, and whatever is compared to it insignificant.§

It falls not within the limits of this discourse to illustrate at large the manner in which the word of God produces a saving change: two circumstances may suffice to establish the fact. The first is, that where the light of the gospel is unknown no such beneficial alteration in the character is perceived, no features of a renewed and sanctified mind are to be traced. The second is, that among those who live under the light of the gospel, the reality of such a change is less or more to be perceived, in proportion to the degree in which the gospel is seriously attended to and cordially received. Every person who is deeply influenced by religious considerations, and enabled to live a holy and spiritual life, will acknowledge his deep obligations to the gospel; and that it is to its distinguishing discoveries he is, under God,

* Phil. ii. 13. † Titus iii. 5. ‡ 2 Thess. i. 11. § Gal. iii 1.

indebted for the renovation he has experienced. "Being born again," saith St. Peter, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."*

III. We are directed to the consideration of the end proposed by this regenerating influence, "that we might be a kind of first-fruit of the creatures."

In the Jewish law, which was, in all its essential parts, a perpetual shadow of the gospel, the first-fruits of the earth were commanded to be dedicated in the temple, and presented by the priest as an offering to God: "The first of the fruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord thy God."† In the performance of this part of religious duty, an affecting form of words was prescribed, expressive of the humility and gratitude of the offerer.‡ When a vineyard was planted, the Israelites were forbidden to partake of the fruits for the first three years, during which it was to be looked upon as uncircumcised and impure: "And when ye shall come into the land, and shall have planted all manner of trees for food, then ye shall count the fruit thereof as uncircumcised: three years shall it be as uncircumcised unto you: it shall not be eaten of. But in the fourth year all the fruit thereof shall be holy to praise the Lord withal."§

In allusion to this the apostle observes, the design of Christianity is, that being received into the heart as a renovating principle, we may become in a spiritual sense what the fruits presented in the temple were in a literal,—"a certain first-fruits of his creatures;" in which representation he meant probably to include the following ideas:—that we should be dedicated to God as holy persons, separated from every unclean use; that we should be distinguished as the most excellent part of his creatures, as the first-fruits were ever considered as the best of the kind; and that our dedication to God should be a pledge and [earnest] of the universal sanctification of the creatures.

1. This representation denotes our solemn dedication to God as holy persons,—as persons set apart for his use and service. Christians are not their own, and the method by which God claims and appropriates them to himself is that of regenerating grace.

The principle of regeneration is a principle which prompts men to devote themselves to God. They in whom it is planted "present themselves a living sacrifice,"‖ as "a reasonable service;" they present all their faculties and powers to him; their understanding, to be guided and enlightened by his truth; their will, to be swayed by his authority and to be obedient to his dictates; their hearts and affections, to be filled with his presence and replenished with his love; the

* 1 Pet. i. 23.

† Exod. xxxiv. 26.

‡ "Thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the *Lord* thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the *Lord* thy God shall choose to place his name there.

"And thou shalt speak and say before the *Lord* thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous.

"And now, behold, I have brought the first-fruits of the land which thou, O *Lord*, hast given me And thou shalt set it before the *Lord* thy God, and worship before the *Lord* thy God." Deut xxvi. 2, 5, 10.

§ Lev xix. 23, 24

‖ Rom. xii. 1.

members of their body, to be instruments of his glory sacred to his use; their time, to be employed in the way which he directs, and in pursuit of the objects which he prescribes, and no longer according to the dictates of inclination and caprice. They feel and cheerfully acknowledge the obligations they are under to regard him as their God,—their owner and their Lord, through the Redeemer. They deprecate the thought of considering themselves under any other light than as those who are "bought with a price;"* that as God was highly honoured by presenting the first-fruits in the temple, since it was an acknowledgment of the absolute right over all things inhering in him, and whatever was possessed was held at his pleasure, so he is much more honoured by devoting ourselves, in proportion as the offerer is superior to the gift, in proportion as a reasonable creature is superior to unconscious matter. "They gave themselves," says St. Paul, speaking of the Macedonians, "first to the Lord;"† they gave themselves immediately to Jesus Christ as the great High-priest and Mediator, to be by him presented with acceptance to the Father, just as the basket of first-fruits was put into the hand of the priests to be laid upon that "altar which sanctifies the gift."‡ It would have been great presumption for an Israelite to present his fruits without the intervention of the priest, as they were to be received immediately from his hands; so in our approaches we are to come first to the Mediator, and in his name to devote ourselves to God: "No man cometh to the Father but by him."§

Though we are infinitely unworthy of the acceptance of so great a King, yet when we present ourselves we offer the noblest present in our power, we offer that which has an intrinsic excellence far beyond the most costly material gifts: we offer what has a suitability in it to the character of God; that which is immaterial to the "Father of lights,"‖ and that which is spiritual to the "Father of spirits."¶ If he will deign to receive any tribute or acknowledgment at the hands of a fallen creature, as he had demonstrated his readiness to do through a Mediator, what can be deemed equally fit for this purpose with the solemn consecration of our inmost powers to him, in love, adoration, and obedience? A soul resigning itself to him, panting after him, and ambitious of pleasing him in all things, is a far more excellent gift than the numerous peace-offerings which Solomon, surrounded by a whole nation, presented at the dedication of the temple. Under the gospel he makes little account of other offering: the fruit which he demands is the fruit of our lips. By the Lord Jesus, therefore, "let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name."** When the fruits were dedicated the grant was irrevocable. The right to them passed fully and for ever from the offerer, so as to make it impossible for him ever to resume them again. Thus when we have dedicated ourselves to God the act is irrevocable; we must never pretend the least right in ourselves any more; we are to consider ourselves entirely the Lord's.

* 1 Cor. vi. 20. † 2 Cor. viii. 5. ‡ Matt. xxiii. 19. § John xiv. 6.
‖ James i. 17. ¶ Heb. xii. 9. ** Heb. xiii. 15.

2. This "being a certain first-fruits of his creatures," denotes the superior honour and dignity which it is the gracious design of God to put upon Christians. The first-fruits presented to God were not only required to be of the best, but they derived a pre-eminence above all others from the very circumstance of their being dedicated to God; they were employed to a nobler use. Grace dignifies and exalts in a similar manner its possessor: "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour;"* however obscure in station, and however beclouded and depressed by the meanness of his external condition, he is one of the excellent of the earth. His employment is that of "a king and a priest unto God."† In reflecting some rays of his image, in advancing the honour and sustaining the cause of the blessed God, he is infinitely more honourably occupied than the votaries of the world or the servants of sin. His calling is "high and heavenly."‡ He is associated with Jesus and the holy angels in sacred ministries, his pursuits are of a permanent and eternal nature.

If we consider the principles, also, which actuate good men and form the basis of their character, we shall perceive a greatness and elevation to which the world is an entire stranger. Is there nothing more noble in taking a wide prospect, and in looking at "the things which are unseen and eternal,"§ than in being absorbed in transitory concerns? Is not that a higher species of wisdom which calculates upon the interests and advantage which lie concealed from eyes of flesh in the depths of eternity, than that which contents itself with securing perishing riches?

Is it not incomparably more noble and more worthy of an immortal creature to be "providing for himself bags that wax not old," "a treasure in the heavens that fadeth not,"‖ than in searching for "filthy lucre?"¶ Is there not more true dignity in the patience that waits with composure to be happy, than in the childish eagerness which catches at every momentary gratification? Is it not more magnanimous to conquer than submit to the world? to tread the world under our feet than to be enslaved by it? to be able to exercise that self-command over our sensual affections which secures the pleasures of innocence and the approbation of conscience, than to be the victim of unbridled passions? to rule our own spirit, than to be the sport of its tyrannical disorder? to rise above a sense of injury so as to forgive our enemies, rather than to be tormented with malice and revenge? He must be insensible to reason who is at a loss how to answer these interrogatories; and to answer them in the affirmative is to attest the superior dignity of the Christian character, to acknowledge that Christians are "a sort of first-fruits of the creatures."

They are so at present with all the imperfections which attach to their state and their character; but they will be incomparably more so when they shall be assembled around the Throne, and it shall be declared of them, "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he

* Prov. xii. 26. † Rev. i. 6. ‡ Heb. iii. 1.
§ 2 Cor. iv. 18. ‖ Luke xii. 33 ¶ 1 Tim. iii. 3.

goeth: these were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and the Lamb."*

3. The representation of Christians as a certain first-fruits of the creatures implies the accession of the future harvest; they are a pledge only of what is to follow; their dedication to God as the first-fruits is a preparation for the universal prevalence of religion,—the universal sanctification of the creatures.

*Improvement.*

I. Let us adore God for having planted in the breast a principle of true religion.

II. Let us be ambitious of exemplifying the excellence and dignity of our Christian calling.

III. As an important means of this, let us study the gospel, and endeavour to gain a deeper and more extensive acquaintance with the word of truth.†

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## XII.

### ON SPIRITUAL DEATH.

EPH. ii. 1.—*And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.*

THE power of God was most illustriously displayed in raising Christ from the dead; but there is another operation of Divine power which bears a great resemblance to this, of which every individual believer is the subject. It is the prayer of the apostle, in the latter part of the preceding chapter, that the Ephesians might have an increasing experience of the effects of that power which is exerted towards "them that believe, according to the working of his mighty power;" and what particular effect of Divine [power] he had in immediate contemplation, he informs us in the first part of the ensuing chapter: "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." He had not merely raised Christ from the dead, but he had wrought a similar deliverance for the Ephesians by imparting spiritual life to those who had been dead in trespasses and sins.

In treating of these words, I shall first inquire to what extent this representation of a death in trespasses and sins is to be applied, and to what description of persons it belongs; secondly, I shall endeavour to show its import; and thirdly, make a few remarks on the wretched state of those who may justly be affirmed to be dead in trespasses and sins.

* Rev. xiv. 4.
† Preached 7th of March, 1811, at the Wednesday evening lecture

May the Lord the Spirit apply the awful truths we shall have occasion to unfold, with power to the conscience.

I. Are those expressions, "dead in trespasses and sins," to be understood as applicable only, or chiefly, to heathens? or to such in Christian countries as have run very remarkable lengths in wickedness? or are they applicable to the state of the unconverted universally? The heathen, say some, were exceedingly corrupt and wicked, totally enslaved to idols, "without hope and without God in the world." It was in consideration of this their remarkable alienation from God, and extreme corruption of manners, the apostle was led to employ such phrases; which are by no means to be applied to men educated in the light of Christianity, although they may not yet be in a state of salvation. Whether the representation applies to heathens only, or to those in a Christian country who for their enormous sins may be justly compared to heathens; or whether they are to be applied to unconverted sinners universally, will perhaps sufficiently appear from the following considerations.

1. The apostle expressly includes himself among those whose former state he had been considering.* To the same purpose the apostle includes himself in the following description: "For we ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another."†

2. The same expression is applied generally to those who never were heathens. "And another of his disciples said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said, Let the dead bury their dead,"‡ the meaning of which is obvious. Let those who are spiritually dead, who are therefore totally unqualified to serve me in the gospel, perform such offices as those, to which they are fully equal; but for thee, thou art fitted for a higher and nobler employment —go thou and preach the gospel.

3. It is the declared intention of Jesus Christ, by his appearance in our world, to give life to the world by exhibiting himself as the bread of life. "I am come that they might have life."§ Here we have the affirmation of him that cannot lie; that those, whosoever they be, that are destitute of saving faith, are also destitute of spiritual life. "They have no life in them;"‖ which can surely be understood in no other sense than what is equivalent to the passage before us.

4. True Christians, without any exception, are described as persons who have "passed from death unto life."¶ "He that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but hath passed from death unto life."** "Hereby we know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren; he that loveth not his brother abideth in death."††

Here the moral state of the world is supposed to be separated by an invisible boundary into two regions, a region of life and a region of death; and it is implied that none come into the former, that is, that

* Eph. ii. 3, 4. † Tit. iii. 3. ‡ Matt. viii. 22. § John x. 10; vi. 32, 33.
‖ John vi. 53. ¶ John v. 24. ** Ibid. †† 1 John iii. 14.

of life, but by passing into it from the latter They were not natives of this blessed region, but migrated or travelled to it from an opposite one. And who are those remaining in a state of death? "He who loveth not his brother;" that is, who loveth not Christians as Christians, which is certainly the character of all the unrenewed and unregenerate. We are justified then in applying this description "dead in trespasses and sins," to every person who has not been renewed by the grace of God.

It is time to proceed, in the next place, to explain the import of this representation, or to unfold some of the leading particulars included in a state of spiritual death.

1. It implies a privation, or withdrawment, of a principle, which properly belongs, and once did belong, to the subject of which it is affirmed. It would be quite improper to speak of any thing as dead which was never endued with a living principle. We never speak of the inanimate parts of creation, such as earth and stones, as dead, because they are as they ever were; no living powers are extinguished in them. But from whatever once had life, when that life is withdrawn which it formerly possessed, we affirm that it is dead. Thus we speak of plants, of animals, and men, when bereft of the vital principle, as dead. The death that overspreads the souls of the unregenerate consists in privations, in the withdrawment of what originally belonged to the soul of man, that gracious communication from God which is life. As the life of the body is derived from its union with the immortal spirit, and continues no longer than while that union subsists, so the life of the soul is derived from its union with God. Sin dissolved that union. In consequence of sin the blessed [God] withdrew from the soul, and the effect of that is, that though it is not deprived of its natural powers, as the body even after death still continues to subsist as matter; its life and happiness are gone.

The withdrawment of God is with respect to the soul, what the withdrawment of the soul is in relation to the body. In each case the necessary effect is death; and as that which occasioned that withdrawment is sin, it is very properly denominated a "death in trespasses and sins." Now this view of the subject ought surely to fill us with the deepest concern. Had man never possessed a principle of divine life, there would have been less to lament in his condition. We are less affected at the consideration of what we never had, than by the loss of advantages which we once possessed. We look at a stone, or a piece of earth, without the least emotion, because, though it be destitute of life, we are conscious it was never possessed. But when we look upon a corpse, it excites an awful feeling. Here, we are ready to reflect [and] say, dwelt an immortal spirit; those eyes were once kindled, those limbs were once animated by an ethereal fire, and a soul was once diffused throughout this frame. It is now fled, and has left nothing but the ruins of a man. Did we view things in a right light, we should be far more affected still in contemplating a dead soul. Here, we should remember, God once dwelt. The soul of man was once the abode of light and life. "How is the gold changed, and the

fine gold become dim!" It is now overspread with carnality and darkness. It is now a lost, fallen spirit.

2. To be dead in trespasses and sins intimates the total, the universal prevalence of corruption.

Life admits of innumerable degrees and kinds. There is one sort of vegetative life, as in plants, another subsists in animals, and in man a rational, which is a still more superior principle of life. Where life is of the same sort it is susceptible of different degrees. It is much more perfect in the larger sorts of animals than in reptiles. The vital principle in different men exists with various degrees of vigour, so that some are far more animated, alert, and vigorous than others. But there are no degrees in death. All things of which it can be truly said that they are dead are equally dead. There are no degrees in privation; thus it is with all who are dead in trespasses and sins. They are all equally dead. They may possess very estimable and amiable qualities, such as naturally engage the love of their fellow-creatures; but being equally destitute of a principle of spiritual life, they are all in one and the same state of death; they are governed by the same carnal principle; they are in the flesh, and therefore cannot please God.* They are alike subjects of the prince of darkness; they serve the same master, and belong to the same kingdom. Every unsanctified person is totally "alienated from the life of God,"—is totally devoid of love to Him, and a perception of his true glory and excellence. How can it be otherwise, when he is under the influence of that "carnal mind which is enmity against God?"† There are some sinners who are of so winning and gentle a disposition that we are ready to flatter ourselves it is easy to conduct them to God, and to form them to the love and practice of true religion; but when the experiment is tried, we soon find ourselves undeceived. Unless the Spirit of God pleases to operate, we find it as impossible to persuade them to seek the Lord by prayer, to mortify their corruptions, and set their affections on heavenly things, as persons of the most forbidding and unamiable tempers. We discover a rooted and invincible antipathy to whatever is spiritual. There are others who, by the influences of

* Rom. viii. 8. † Rom. viii. 7.

## XIII.

### ON CONVERSION, AS ILLUSTRATED BY THAT OF ST. PAUL

GAL. i. 15, 16.—*But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.*

OF all the events which can befall us in this transitory state, there is none which deserves equally to be devoutly reflected upon with our conversion to God. This is an event by far the most important and the most beneficial. In looking back upon it, the strongest motives arise to humility, to gratitude, and to "a patient continuance in well-doing." We find the holy apostle frequently adverting to it; always in terms that bespeak the lively impression the review of it made on his mind. In the case of St. Paul, there were many circumstances not paralleled in the general experience of Christians; but in its essential features, in the views with which it was accompanied, and the effects it produced, it was exactly the same as every one must experience before he can enter into the kingdom of God.

As things of an internal and spiritual nature are best understood by examples, so we shall be at a loss, in the whole records of the church, to find a more striking and instructive example of the efficacy of divine grace in conversion than that of St. Paul, to which he directs the attention of the Galatians in the passage under present consideration. In this instructive passage he gives us a view of his conversion in its causes, its means, and its effects.

I. Its causes. "He separated me from my mother's womb." Thus he styles [himself] "separated to the gospel of God."* It is possible he may allude to the revelation to Jeremiah on his appointment to the prophetic office: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and ordained thee to be a prophet to the nations."†

While he, Paul, was running a career of persecuting fury, the Saviour entertained designs of mercy towards him, agreeable to what he declared to Ananias:—"He is a chosen vessel to me to confess my name before nations, and kings, and the people of Israel."‡

We cannot suppose the purposes of God to be of recent date, or to have taken rise from any limited point of time. What he designs he designs from eternity. Whatever he accomplishes is agreeable to his eternal purposes and word: "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own

* Rom. i. 1 † Jer. i. 5. ‡ Acts ix. 1.

purposes and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."* Did he separate the apostle from his mother's womb? was he a chosen vessel? and must we not affirm [the same] of every one who is made partaker of the grace that is in Christ Jesus? Are not all genuine Christians addressed as "elect of God," or chosen of God, "through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ?"† Why should not the real Christian give scope to those emotions of gratitude which such reflections will inspire? Why should he not adore that mercy which preserved him in his unregenerate state, spared him while in his sins, and waited to be gracious?

The next cause, the more immediate one, to which the apostle ascribes his conversion, was his call by divine Grace.

"Whom he predestinated them he also called."‡ There is a general call in the gospel, addressed to all men indiscriminately. Gracious invitations are given, without exception, far as the sound of the gospel extends; but this of itself is not effectual. There is in every instance of real conversion another and inward call by which the Spirit applies the general truth of the gospel to the heart.

By this interior call, Christ apprehends, lays hold on the soul, stops it in its impenitent progress, and causes it to "hear his voice."

The methods of the Divine operations in this inward and effectual calling are various; sometimes alarming and awakening providences are made use of for this purpose. The solemnities of death and judgment are forcibly presented to the attention: judgment appears nearly to commence, and the awful scenes of eternity appear near; the careless creature is awakened to perceive his guilt and danger, and is compelled to cry out, "What must I do to be saved?—as when the earthquake, and the opening of the prison doors, accompanied with unspeakable terrors, impressed the obdurate mind of the jailer, and made him fall down at the feet of his prisoners, trembling and amazed. Of the three thousand at the day of Pentecost, we read, that "they were pricked in their heart." Others, like the eunuch and Lydia, are wrought upon in a more gentle manner—drawn with the "cords of love, and the ties of man."

That there is such a change produced by the Spirit of God will not be questioned by a diligent and attentive peruser of the Scriptures; he will observe, the Spirit is always affirmed to be the author of a saving change; and the regenerate are particularly affirmed to be "born of God,"§ "born of the Spirit."‖ In applying the term "called," to such persons in a peculiar sense we have the clearest authority of the Scriptures: "To them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."¶ "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also

* 2 Tim. i. 9. † 1 Pet. i. 2. ‡ Rom viii. 30.
§ 1 John iv. 7. ‖ John iii. 5. ¶ 1 Cor. i. 24.

called,"* &c. This calling is by grace: "Who hath called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace."†

II. The *means* by which conversion is effected: "Revealing his Son in me." The principal method which the Spirit adopts in subduing the heart of a sinner is a spiritual discovery of Christ.

There is an attractive force in the Saviour, when beheld by faith, which commands. Christ crucified possesses a drawing power: "When the Son of man is lifted up, he will draw all men unto him."‡ No radical and saving change is effected, without the exhibition of his object; nor are the terrors of the law alone ever sufficient for hat purpose: they are sufficient to show the heinousness of sin, and the extreme danger to which the sinner is exposed, but have no tendency to produce a complete renovation. "By the law is the knowledge of sin:"§ the law will discover our disease, but the knowledge of Christ is the discovery of the remedy. The law denounces its awful sentence: the discovery of Christ points out the method of deliverance and escape. The law at most is but a pedagogue, or "schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." All saving influence and solid consolation spring from him, and from him alone. "The law kills," as the ministration of condemnation; it is "Christ who makes alive."

The revelation of Christ is found in the Scriptures; but in conversion the Spirit removes "the veil on the heart," dispels prejudice, and affords that inward and divine light by which alone Christ is discerned to saving purposes. St. Paul speaks of Christ being revealed in him, in distinction from that external record of him which is contained in the Word.

As there is an external call and an internal; the former universal, but often ineffectual; the latter personal, but always efficient; so there is an outward revelation of Christ and an internal, of which the understanding and the heart are the seat. Hence it is, with the utmost propriety, said to be a revelation "IN US." The minds of men, until they are renewed, resemble an apartment, shut up and enclosed with something which is not transparent; the light shines around with much splendour, but the apartment remains dark, in consequence of its entrance being obstructed. Unbelief, inattention, love of the world and of sin, hardness of heart, form the obstructions in question. Let these be removed, and the discoveries of the Word penetrate and diffuse a light and conviction through the soul: "The light shined in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not."‖ Thus it was with St. Paul before his conversion: his prejudices against the gospel were inveterate; his animosity violent and active; but no sooner was Christ renewed in him than all was changed. The spirit of God reveals the following things in Christ:—

1. His greatness and dignity. Men in their unrenewed state have very low and contemptible thoughts of Christ Whatever compli-

* Rom viii. 28–30 † 2 Tim. i. 9 ‡ John xii. 32.
§ Rom. iii. 20. ‖ John. i. 5.

mentary epithets they may bestow upon him, they have in their hearts no [elevated] conception of him, but just the contrary: he is to them "a root out of a dry ground." St. Paul had the most mean thoughts of Christ previous to his conversion; but after that these mistaken views were entirely corrected. The majesty and power of Christ were exhibited to him with such effect, that he fell at his feet, exclaiming, "What wilt thou have me to do?"* He was from that moment fully convinced that Jesus Christ had "all power in heaven and on earth," that he was seated at the right-hand of God, and that he was in all respects that great and glorious person which the Scriptures represent him to be. His views were extended and enlarged; an interest in him appeared supremely valuable, his approbation supremely desirable. The knowledge of him appeared to be the most excellent knowledge.

2. The Spirit reveals his transcendent beauty and glory. The Scriptures speak much of the transcendent excellency of Christ, the perception of which has laid a foundation for that ardent attachment which the faithful have borne to him in every age. There is a surpassing beauty in the Saviour, which needs but to be perceived in order to eclipse every [other] object, and make it appear insipid and contemptible in the comparison. This beauty is visible in every part of the Saviour's character. In whatever light he is viewed, he is "fairer than the sons of men." "Grace is poured into his lips." "All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, wherein they have made thee glad."† "Because of the savour of thy good ointments; thy name is as ointment poured forth; therefore do the virgins love thee."

It is of him that Isaiah speaks when he foretels the high esteem in which he should be held in a future age: "In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely to them that are escaped of Israel."‡

3. The Spirit reveals the suitableness, fulness, and sufficiency of the Saviour to supply all our wants and relieve all our miseries. The fitness of his office to our situation, and his complete competence to discharge these offices,—the richness and perfection of that provision which there is in Christ, is a principal part of what the Spirit reveals in conversion. In consequence, the soul is imboldened to venture upon him, and, extinguishing all other hope and confidence, to rely upon him alone. This is that reception of Christ which, whosoever gives, is entitled to the privilege of becoming the child of God.

III. We proceed to remark the effect of St. Paul's conversion. Immediately, "I conferred not with flesh and blood." He was not "disobedient to the heavenly vision." He set himself, without hesitation or demur, to discharge the duties of his heavenly vocation.

1. His compliance with the will of Christ was instant, *immediate*, not like the eldest son in the parable, whom the father commanded to work in his vineyard.§

2. It was universal and impartial. He did not make choice and selection of the more easy duties and less costly sacrifices, but

* Acts ix. 6. † Ps. xlv. 8. ‡ Isa. iv. 2. § Matt. xxi. 28.

engaged in the service thoroughly and conscientiously. He spent his life in a series of most laborious, painful, and self-denying services, not living to himself. He spent his life in publishing the name of the Saviour who had been revealed in him.

3. His compliance was constant and persevering.

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## XIV.

### ON THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL.

ACTS xxvi. 9–18.—*I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities. Whereupon, as I went to Damascus, with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them that journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*

THE conversion of St. Paul is one of the most extraordinary facts recorded in the sacred Scriptures; and, whether we consider it as affording a demonstration of the truth of Christianity, or as illustrating the power of divine grace, it is deserving of most deep meditation.

So sudden a transformation of character as this narrative presents must surely be acknowledged to deserve a thorough investigation by all who conceive the principles of human conduct a proper object of attention and inquiry. It is surely natural to look into the cause of such a change, as well as to consider the effects which it produced, and the issue to which it tended.

Every Christian is so well acquainted with the sufferings and labours

of this chief of the apostles, and has contracted so sacred a friendship with the name of Paul, that the circumstances which led to so great a revolution in his character cannot fail to be interesting.

Let us then, in dependence on Divine assistance, take a review of the most striking particulars of this transaction, and endeavour to raise such reflections as the subject may naturally suggest.

I. Let us consider his previous character and conduct, and the actual state of his mind immediately before the change took place.

1. Of the incidents of his early life we are not furnished with very full and distinct information. We learn that he was a native of Tarsus in Cilicia, a city famous for its schools of philosophy, as well as for having given birth to some of the most eminent philosophers. His extraction, both on the side of his father and mother, was purely Jewish; but, owing to some benefit conferred on his ancestors he was entitled by his birth to the privileges of a Roman citizen. His education was learned; for he was born at Tarsus, and spent his first years there. He came at an early period to Jerusalem, and was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, a member of the Sanhedrim, and a celebrated doctor of the law. This was that Gamaliel who, by his temperate and judicious advice, restrained the violence of the Jewish council, who were determined to put Peter and John to death. His young disciple, Saul, seems to have imbibed nothing of his moderation, but to have been uniformly instigated by a most implacable fury against the Christian cause. From his earliest youth he was of the "strictest sect of the Pharisees," who were not satisfied with complying with every punctilio of the Mosaic law, but adopted a multitude of traditions and ceremonies of human invention, which they placed on the same footing, and deemed equally certain.

In common with the greater part of his countrymen, he held the perpetual and eternal obligation of the Mosaic law, and depended on his legal performances entirely for salvation. Though the sacrifices ordained under the law pointed to the atonement of Jesus Christ, he overlooked this reference; and, full of a confidence in his own rectitude, abhorred and disdained the idea of being indebted for salvation to a crucified Messiah. The poverty and meanness of Christ was an offence to his proud and haughty spirit; and the cross, which he endured for the expiation of sin, was a stumbling-block. He believed, no doubt, in a Messiah; but the person he expected under that character was a great and victorious prince, invested with secular pomp and glory: who was to break asunder the Roman yoke, and raise the Jews to the pinnacle of human greatness: and therefore, when he observed that Jesus was so far from accomplishing these hopes that he died the death of the meanest malefactor, he regarded him as a mean and detestable impostor. When he heard the apostles testify his resurrection, assure him that he was exalted at the right-hand of God, and that salvation and the remission of sins were to be sought solely through his blood, his prejudices rose to the utmost violence; and he resented a doctrine which he considered as offering an insult to the whole Jewish nation. As he was taught to look upon the Jews as the

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*thing I also did in Jerusalem*
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*when they were put to death*
*punished them oft in ever*
*pheme; and being exceed*
*even unto strange cities.*
*authority and commissi*
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e of a Jew, and the self-
the violence of youth and
his superiors, and hurried him
the cause of Christ. He seems
ect,—the utter extirpation, if possible,
Stephen was stoned, he was consenting
n his death; and so zealous did he appear
e witnesses laid down their clothes at his
in this work of blood. The death of Stephen
neral persecution, in which Saul appears to have
e part: "As for Saul, he made great havoc of the
t. Luke, "entering into every house, and haling men
mmitted them to prison."* Having received a commis-
e high-priest, he went on the same errand to Damascus;
found there any "of the same way" he might bring them
to Jerusalem. During his journey he was revolving with delight
confusion and misery he should produce among the defenceless
followers of Christ; and when he drew near enough to Damascus to
take a view of the city, he no doubt exulted at the idea of being so
near his prey. He feasted in the prospect of scattering the sheep of
Christ, of dissolving their assemblies, and inflicting upon them the
severest sufferings his malice could devise: "he breathed out threat-
enings and slaughter."† Little did he think of the change he was about
to undergo;—little did he [anticipate] that astonishing scene of things

* Acts viii. 3. † Acts ix 1.

laid open to his view. He had hitherto confined
alem and its immediate environs: he had now
commission, which extended to a remote
two hundred miles distant from Jerusa-
as at that time under the dominion of
nce tributary to the Roman empire:
ermitted the interference of the
greatly favoured those that

avourable to Christianity,
o Christ, than that of
ring a long journey,
towards the innocent
hesitation respecting the
gs, appear to have been felt.
enly stopped in his career, and
ses. The means by which this was
torian distinctly relates. He was a
as "separated from his mother's womb."‡
in which the gracious designs of God were
But with what awful majesty is God pleased
ensations of his grace towards guilty men! When
show mercy, it is in a manner worthy of himself, in a
adapted to stain the pride of man, and to cause "that no
d glory in his presence." If the God with whom we have
ppears great and awful in the revelation of his mercy, what
ne be in the execution of his justice on the finally impenitent?
Hitherto we have witnessed the dominance of pride, bigotry, and passion, suffered to operate without control; we are now to contemplate the interposition of Divine grace in abasing that pride, dispelling that prejudice, allaying the tumult of that passion. We shall see, in the instance before us, what methods the Lord Jesus adopted, more fully to apprehend the fugitive and the rebel; to soften his heart, and make him become a willing captive at his feet: "And as he journeyed he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shone round about him a light from heaven; and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."§

In his speech before Agrippa, St. Paul relates the circumstance of the light shining round him, in the following manner: "At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them that journeyed with me." This light was not indebted to a surrounding obscurity for any part of its lustre: on the contrary, it shone forth at midday with a splendour

* See 2 Cor. xi. 32; and Joseph. de Bell. Jud. lib. ii. cap. 25. The Romans, says Grotius, allowed the Jews the privilege of "apprehending and beating," not only with regard to the Jews of Palestine, but also out of Palestine, wherever there were synagogues that acknowledged the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrim in matters of religion.—Ed.

† Acts ix. 15. ‡ Gal. i. 15. § Acts ix. 3–5

that eclipsed the beams of a meridian sun. It was the light of [divine] glory which Saul beheld on this occasion; that light unapproachable in which Jesus Christ continually dwells. It was of the same nature as that which St. John describes in his vision, when he says, "His countenance was as the sun shining in his strength." It was that light in which he will appear when he comes to judge the world, "and every eye shall see him."

Much as the prophets and apostles have said of the glory of Christ, it is impossible for us to form an adequate conception of it: the full revelation of it is reserved for a future state, when, if we are true Christians, "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."*

How short is the transition between this and the unseen world!—How soon, when God pleases, can he transport his creatures into higher scenes of existence! It is but for him to draw aside the veil, and objects are presented to the view, compared to which whatever is most admired on earth is mean and contemptible. Every moment we stand upon the confines of an eternal state, and, without dissolving the connexion between soul and body, God can open a passage into the "heaven of heavens." Why should we doubt of good men's being admitted into the more immediate presence of Christ at death, when we consider what Saul was permitted to see and hear before he was finally removed from this world? St. Stephen beheld the heavens open, and the Son of man standing at the right-hand of God; and Saul, in the transaction before us, was permitted to see that Just One, and to hear the words of his mouth. Along with the light a voice was heard, saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."

This solemn question is replete with instruction. He does not condescend to reason with Saul; he enters into no vindication of his cause: with the dignity suited to his character, he expostulates and warns.

It deserves our attention, that he identifies himself with his disciples; he makes their cause entirely his own, and considers what is done against them as against himself: "Why persecutest thou me?" Christ and believers, notwithstanding the immense disparity of their circumstances, are one. He is touched with a feeling of their sufferings; and whatever insults or reproaches are offered to them for his name's sake, he feels and resents as done to himself. Let those who are tempted to insult and despise the followers of Christ on account of their conscientious adherence to him, remember that their scoffs and insults reach higher than they may apprehend; they will be considered as falling on their Sovereign and their Judge.

Personal injuries it is impossible now to offer to the Saviour; but the state of our hearts towards him will be judged by our treatment of his followers: and he has warned us, that it were better a "millstone were hanged round our neck, and we buried in the depths of the sea, than that we should injure one of these little ones who believe on him."†

In answer to the inquiry, "Who art thou, Lord?" he replies, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." You will observe, he does not style

* 1 John iii. 2. † Matt. xviii. 6.

himself here the Christ, or the Son of God—"I am Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus was the proper name of our Lord, a common appellation among the Jews, and the addition of *Nazareth* had usually been made as expressive of contempt. In contempt, He was usually styled "the Nazarene." Our Lord was determined to confound Paul by the meanest of his appellations, and resolved to efface the ignominy attached to this appellation, and to cause himself to be adored by Saul under the very names by which he had been most vilified and con temned. "It is hard," he adds, "for thee to kick against the pricks." He compares Paul to the bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, who, in order to free himself, wounds himself by kicking against the goads. Thus fruitless is all opposition to the cause of Christ. It will be injurious, it will be destructive to ourselves if not desisted from, but can never eventually injure the cause against which it is directed The heathen may rage, and yet "the Lord hath set his King upon his holy hill of Zion,"* and there he will for ever continue to sit.

To all who oppose him he will prove a burdensome stone, "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence."† "Whosoever shall fall upon it shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."‡

To those who judge by the eyes of flesh, persecuting the servants of Christ may possibly appear a very easy task; but to those who remember who is engaged to be their Protector it will appear in a very different light—it will appear the most dangerous employment in which they can be engaged.

The time will come, my brethren, when we shall perceive we might as safely have insulted the prince upon his throne as persecuted Christ in the person of the meanest of his members.

"It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." How many Pontius Pilates and Herods, in different ages, has this crime doomed to destruction! We may trace the effects of it in the astonishing scenes that are now passing in the world. We may behold it in the subversion of thrones, and the misery and desolation of kingdoms. For though the immediate instrument employed in inflicting these calamities is the insatiable ambition of an individual, they must in general be traced to higher sources—the unrepented crime of persecution. Who that reads the prophecies but sees that it is the weight of Christian blood—the blood of the martyrs of Jesus, that now presses and weighs down the nations of the continent, and makes them reel and stagger like a drunken man: "They have shed the blood of saints and of prophets, and the Lord has given them blood to drink, for they are worthy."§

Let us guard against whatever approaches to this crime. If you will not walk in the ways of religion yourself—if you will not take the yoke of Christ upon you, at least be careful to abstain from vilifying and reproaching his servants. Respect the piety you are not disposed to imitate.

"What wilt thou have me to do?" He makes no stipulation; his surrender of himself is absolute; the words he utters are expressive

* Psalm ii. 6. † Isaiah viii. 14. ‡ Luke xx. 18. § Rev. xvi. 6.

of absolute submission. Such a surrender of ourselves into the hands of Christ, such a submission from us [also] is absolutely necessary.

He is directed what to do, and he complies punctually with the direction. "He was not disobedient to the heavenly vision."* For a further account of our Saviour's address, see Acts xxvi. 16–18.

He was blinded by the light. (Acts xxii. 11.)

He gave himself up to solitude and prayer.

He would doubtless reflect on the following things:—

1. On what he had seen.
2. On what he had done.
3. On what lay before him.

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## XV.

### THE LAMB SLAIN THE OBJECT OF RAPTURE TO THE HEAVENLY HOSTS.

REV. v. 6.—*And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain.*

IN the preceding chapter John is presented with a magnificent vision: a door is opened in heaven, through which he passes, and beholds the throne of God, and the Almighty sitting upon it. The several orders of creatures which make their appearance there celebrate a solemn act of worship to him "which was, and which is, and which is to come, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."†

As the holy apostle was now on the point of being instructed in those mysteries of Providence whose accomplishment was to reach from the time of this vision to the consummation of all things, involving the remotest destinies of the church and of the world, so the manner in which it is imparted is such as must give us the highest idea of its importance. It formed the contents of a roll of a book in the hand of him that sat on the throne, "written within and on the backside, and sealed with seven seals."‡ The whole universe is challenged to furnish one who is capable of loosing these seals and exploring its contents. "And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon."§

The apostle, whose mind was inflamed with solicitude to be made acquainted with these mysteries, wept much at finding there was none

* Acts xxvi. 19. † Rev. iv. 8, 10, 11. ‡ Rev. v. 1. § Rev. v. 2, 3.

worthy to loose the seals and to open the book. And one of the elders said unto him, "Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof."

Under this emblem Jesus Christ is represented, alluding to the prophetic benediction of the patriarch Jacob—"Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre," he adds, "shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come."* Judah was the regal tribe, and famous for its warlike exploits; distinguished by a succession of illustrious princes and conquerors, the descendants of David, who were at most but the forerunners and representatives of an incomparably greater personage, the Son of God, who, after he had vanquished the powers of darkness, was to be invested with an everlasting dominion, that all nations, tongues, and people should serve him.

While John was expecting to see some majestic appearance, he beheld, and lo, a Lamb with the marks of recent slaughter presented himself before the throne, and he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat on it: upon which the several orders of creatures "fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth."†

Emblems of weakness, of innocence, and of suffering made part in a scene where [we might] suppose nothing to enter but unmingled grandeur. Nor are the sufferings of Jesus Christ in our nature merely indistinctly introduced; they are the principal objects presented to the view; they are made the basis of that wonderful act of adoration in which every creature in the universe unites. The portion of Scripture which I have selected for our present improvement, thus introduced, suggests the two following important observations.

I. That the distinguishing merit of Christ arises from his having redeemed us to God by his blood.

II. That this part of his character engages the attention and the adoration of the heavenly world.

I. That which distinguishes the character of Christ from all other beings is his condescension for the salvation of men.

1. The Scriptures uniformly teach us to look upon the death of Christ in a light totally distinct from that of any other person. Considered in itself it is not at all extraordinary, for in every age we find examples of those who have sealed the divine truth with their blood. We learn from the New Testament that such was the end of Stephen, of James, of Paul, and of Peter. It is one of those trials which Jesus warned his disciples to expect, insomuch that to be prepared at his

* Gen. xlix. 9 10. † Rev. v. 8-10.

call to surrender their lives was an inseparable condition of becoming his followers. But to none of their sufferings were such purposes assigned, such effects ascribed, as are uniformly ascribed to the sufferings of the Saviour.

"Precious," indeed, "in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his saints," but it is never represented as having the remotest connexion with the remission of sins. They are never represented as set forth for a propitiation. Where is the death of Peter or of Paul spoken of in such language as this:—"He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God through him:"*—"He laid on him the iniquity of us all; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we were healed;"†—"He was delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification;"‡—not to mention innumerable other passages equally clear and decisive? What language that bears the least resemblance to this is applied to any other subject? The great apostle speaks of Christ's dying behaviour as a part of his character which was altogether inimitable: "Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"§

2. Accordingly, the inspired writers never mention the death of Christ without emotions of devout rapture. The prayer of Paul for his Christian converts was, that they might "know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."‖ It is the grand argument which they employ to enforce the obligation of Christians to love each other, "even as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour."¶ "Herein is love," John exclaims, "not that we loved him, but that he loved us, and gave himself for us."** This love was the motive which, with a sweet but irresistible violence, impelled them to devote themselves entirely to his service. "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if Christ died for all, then were all dead: and he died, that they who live should not henceforth live to themselves, but to him who died for them."†† As the morality of the gospel is distinguished from that of the world by being founded in love; so the devout contemplation of the love of Christ is the grand principle which kindles and inflames it.

3. When the great Ruler of the world was pleased to accomplish his secret purpose of reconciling the sinful race of man to himself, by the pardon of their sins and the renewal of their natures, he saw fit to appoint his Son to be their surety, to assume their nature, and to die in their stead: "Great is the mystery of godliness; God manifest in the flesh."‡‡ Instead of endeavouring to explore all the secret reasons of this wonderful economy, it rather becomes us thankfully to accept, and devoutly to adore it. It is sufficient for us to perceive, that no method within our comprehension could have equally provided for the display, at once, of his justice and of his mercy; his spotless purity, and his infinite compassion. In making his Son the sacrifice, justice

* 2 Cor. v. 21. † Isaiah liii. 5, 6. ‡ Rom. iv. 25.
§ 1 Cor. i. 13. ‖ Ephes. iii. 19. ¶ Ephes. v. 2.
** 1 John iv. 10. †† 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. ‡‡ 1 Tim. iii. 16.

appears in its utmost splendour; while, in freely "giving him up for us all," mercy appears in its most attractive form.

The highest lessons of purity and holiness are learned at the foot of the cross; and if we are desirous of discovering an effectual antidote to the love of sin, it must be the serious and steady contemplation, by faith, of Christ crucified.

4. Salvation through the blood of the Redeemer, though it forms the distinguishing feature of the Christian system, was not peculiar to it. It entered into every dispensation of religion communicated by God. A multitude of types and figures were employed, to shadow forth the great expiatory sacrifice, previous to his manifestation in the flesh. He was the Paschal Lamb whose "blood, sprinkled on the posts and lintels of the doors,"* secured the families of Israel from the destroying angel, in the night when God slew the first-born of Egypt: "Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us."† He was prefigured by all those burnt-offerings which were daily offered in the temple, and especially on the day of annual atonement, when the blood of the victim was carried by the high-priest into the holy of holies. The goat that was slain on that occasion, and whose blood was presented before the mercy-seat, prefigured the vicarious death of Christ, and his entrance into heaven; the other, called the scape-goat, which, after having the sins of the congregation‡ * * * * *

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II. This part of our Saviour's character engages the attention and adoration of the heavenly world.

1. They adore this matchless display of love in his condescending to become man, to endure reproaches and sufferings, and at length to expire on the cross, to rescue the guilty from ruin. These benevolent spirits are not unaccustomed to perform kind offices for men: they often appeared under the ancient economy in visible form, to warn, to instruct, and to comfort; so they are still "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."§ But nothing which they ever performed bore any resemblance to the incarnation and sufferings of Jesus Christ.

On no other occasion did love ever stoop so low, endure so much, or operate in so free and spontaneous a manner. He who assumed nothing in making himself equal with God "took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross."‖ In his mysterious descent, he passed by superior orders of being, to invest himself with human flesh. He who was the "Wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father," condescended to become the "Son given," and the "child born." And never was humiliation so deep, never was there reproach and infamy so extreme as that which he endured. Loaded with the most shameful appellations, and persecuted throughout the whole of his life, in its last scenes he was arraigned before Pontius Pilate, smitten on

* Exod. xii. 7, 13. † 1 Cor. v. 7. ‡ Lev. xvi. 2, 20-34. Heb. ix. 7-15.
§ Heb. i. 14. ‖ Phil. ii. 7, 8.

the face, derided, clothed with mock robes, buffeted, scourged, spit upon. Never were there such indignities heaped on any head as on that which was destined to wear many crowns. And for his sufferings!—who can contemplate that hour of darkness in the garden of Gethsemane, when his soul was overwhelmed with amazement and horror, or behold his lingering torments on the cross, without being appalled? It is a trial to human fortitude to be obliged merely to think of what he actually endured. And for whom? For the sinners of Jerusalem! for many of that infatuated multitude who were impatient for his crucifixion: for some, there is reason to believe, who were employed in nailing him to the cross! for a Saul, who was "breathing out threatenings and slaughter" against his followers: for millions of proud and daring offenders, whom this unparalleled love was to soften and disarm!

2. They contemplate and adore in the death of Christ a new display of the divine perfections. The wisdom and the power of God are every way manifest. His goodness may be traced in innumerable portions of his works. He had displayed his justice in the punishment of fallen angels, who were reserved in chains of darkness against the judgment of the great day. But there remained a new view of the divine character. God was pleased to present himself in a new light to the adoration of his creatures. He was pleased to show, in the same transaction, the most determined hatred to sin, with the utmost compassion to the sinner; the most inflexible adherence to rectitude, with the utmost riches of grace to the undeserving;—"a just God, yet a Saviour." He resolved to exhibit in the person of his Son a new spectacle to the universe: a person the most majestic, and the most humble; the most powerful, and the most compassionate; an authority which should subdue to itself "all principality;"—a Saviour who should "feed his flock like a shepherd;"—"the Lion of the tribe of Judah," and "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

3. They rejoiced at the immense accession of happiness which they perceived to flow from the death of Jesus Christ.

(1.) How safe is the worship of Christ!

(2.) How necessary to inquire how we stand affected towards the Saviour!

(3.) How much the supreme love of Christ, and an humble affiance in his merits, tends to prepare for the happiness of heaven!

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## XVI.

### THE GLORY OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

PSALM cxlv. 11.—*They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom.*

THE absolute dominion of God, as the universal Proprietor and Lord, is an object which deserves most devoutly to be celebrated. It is, in

fact, the frequent theme of the praises dictated under the inspiration of the Spirit in the sacred oracles. But there is another of the dominions of God, considered in relation to his saints,—an empire of knowledge and of love, whose administration is intrusted to his Son,—which is celebrated in still sublimer strains, and forms the principal theme of the New Testament. This is emphatically denominated the kingdom of heaven, or that kingdom which the God of heaven should set up, given to "the saints of the Most High," which is to be of everlasting duration, and never to be succeeded by another. Whether the Psalm before us is intended to describe this species of rule and authority, in distinction from the other, I shall not undertake to determine; but as these divine compositions are unquestionably frequently employed in portraying the kingdom of Christ, or the Messiah, it is hoped it will not be deemed improper to consider the words in that light.

Let us direct our thoughts, then, for a short season, to the glory of the kingdom of Christ. With this [view], it may be proper to reflect on the following particulars:—

I. The glory of it is manifest in its origin and the method by which it was acquired. It had its origin in ineffable mercy, under the direction of perfect wisdom and rectitude. It occupied the thoughts, and was the object of the counsels of the Eternal, before the heavens were stretched out, or the foundation of the earth was laid. It formed the centre of the divine designs, and the ultimate point to which every other purpose of God was directed. As it was designed to be the spiritual reign of God over the mind, and at the same time to be a [unanimous, harmonious] kingdom, in which the sovereign and the subjects are always understood to be of the same nature, it was necessary in order to its establishment that God should become incarnate; it was necessary, not only for the redemption of his church, but also for the purpose of their being governed as they were intended to be governed. Ere the government could be placed "on his shoulder,"* it was necessary for the Messiah to be "a child born and a son given."

Again, since in this kingdom the "tabernacle of God" was to be "with men," and he was to "dwell among them,"† and such a condescension of mercy would have been utterly unbecoming "the blessed and only Potentate,"‡ without a signal reparation to the divine honour tarnished by rebellion, it was requisite a sacrifice for sin should be made, worthy of the occasion, which could nowhere be procured but by "the offering of the body of Christ, once for all."§ The inefficiency of the typical sacrifices under the law proclaimed the necessity of one of intrinsic validity and infinite value. Thus the foundation of this empire was laid in the incarnation and atonement of the Son of God; and the solidity and extent of its foundations, great as they are, are but proportioned to the majesty and duration of the edifice.

"Every battle of the warrior," says the prophet Isaiah, "is with confused noise, and with garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire."‖ The kingdom of which we speak is

* Isaiah ix. 6. † Rev. xxi. 3. ‡ 1 Tim. vi. 15.
§ Heb. x. 10. ‖ Isaiah ix. 5.

acquired by conquest, but of a nature totally different from military conquest. The weapons employed in achieving it are purely spiritual—the burning of conviction, the light of truth, the fire of love. The simple testimony of Christ, the publication of the gospel by the "foolishness of preaching," have produced the most wonderful changes in the world, far beyond those which have been effected by violence or the sword. Before these simple but efficacious instruments, the powers of darkness have been overcome; "Satan has fallen like lightning from heaven;"* temples have been overturned, oracles have been struck dumb, the arm of persecuting power has been withered; and men have, in every part of the world, passed through chains, and racks, and fires into the kingdom of God. Heavenly truth, love, and wisdom have grappled with all the powers of falsehood and sophistry, combined with all the blandishments and terrors of the world, and have gained decisive victory. From the smallest beginnings, and by the most contemptible instruments, to human appearance, the gospel, by "commending itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God,"† hath triumphed over all opposition, and is still going forth "conquering, and to conquer."‡

It is thus the Spirit of God addresses the Messiah, in portraying his success in the establishing of his empire: "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O Most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee."§ Truth, meekness, and righteousness are the weapons of his warfare, and the rod of his strength. They "shall be willing in the day of thy power;" they are a conquered, yet a willing people; they submit to his power, but cheerfully and gladly embrace his sceptre: their will itself is so changed, their hearts so touched, that they become "like the chariots of Ammi-nadib."‖

Other potentates extend their empire by force, and by imposing their oke on reluctant necks; Jesus Christ by love, and by exhibiting a matchless example of condescension and [mercy.]

2. The glory of this kingdom is conspicuous in the principles by which it is administered. Of this Prince it is truly said, "Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, nor reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth."¶ The sceptre of his dominion is grace: grace displayed in the gospel, grace communicated by the Spirit, is the grand instrument of maintaining his empire. He reveals his glory and imparts his benefits, and thereby attaches his subjects by ties at once the most forcible and the most engaging.

A lovely assemblage of qualities characterizes the spirit and genius of his divine administration; an incomparable majesty, united to a most

* Luke x. 18. † 2 Cor. iv. 2. ‡ Rev. vi. 2.
§ Psalm xlv. 3 5. ‖ Cant. vi. 12. ¶ Isaiah xi. 3–5

endearing condescension—a spirit of benignity, joined to impartial justice, distinguishes his conduct. Though the subjects of this kingdom are admitted to it on no other condition than a cordial approbation of the character of the Prince, they are not left lawless or uncontrolled: the revelation of the divine will is imparted; the most perfect measure of holiness and rules of conduct are enjoined on the conscience and impressed on the heart. This administration exhibits throughout a beautiful model of the moral government of God, attempered to the state of creatures who have fallen from their original rectitude, but are under a dispensation of mercy. A system of paternal justice is carried into execution throughout this empire; in consequence of which the disobedient are punished, that they may not be condemned with the world. The gradations of favours are regulated by the Sovereign with the most impartial justice; and future rewards distributed [with exquisite propriety and rectitude.]

Human administrations extend only to outward actions, and are conducted entirely by external and visible instruments. Were we not united to a fleshly fabric, they would be incapable of reaching us; so that they extend more properly to the bodies than to the souls of men. The dominion of Christ is chiefly spiritual and internal: the soul is the subject of his authority, where he dwells by faith. It extends to the remotest sentiments of the mind, "casting down high imaginations, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."* It is not the object of our outward senses; it is within us, consisting not in "meats and drinks, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."†

The benefits which human governments impart are principally of a negative kind, consisting in the removal of those checks and restraints which the unreasonable passions of men urge them to impose on each other's enjoyments. The utmost that the wisest earthly government can for the most part effect, is to overawe the mischievous, to

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II. It is glorious with respect to the manner in which it is administered: "The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spake to me. He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light when the sun ariseth, even as a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springeth out of the earth by the clear shining after rain."‡

The most essential quality in a virtuous administration is justice. This property is most conspicuous in the government of Christ over his people. He confers no benefit upon them but what is compatible with the strictest rectitude, having previously made a sufficient atonement for their transgressions. And in every part of his administration, "righteousness is the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins."§ With perfect equity he apportions the degrees of his favour to the respective measures of their attachment and obedience

* 2 Cor. x. 5. † Rom. xiv. 17. ‡ 2 Sam. xxiii. 3, 4. § Isa. xi. 5.

He will render to such of his subjects rewards, not properly on account of their works, but "according to their works."* He employs the pure and holy law of God as the invariable rule of their conduct, and shows how to make such a use of its terrors and sanctions as is subservient to his gracious designs; restraining by fear those who are not susceptible of more liberal and generous motives. As it first convinced them of sin, so it is, in his hands, the instrument of such convictions as the measure of their offence may require; and, by alarming and awakening the conscience, it excites to repentance, vigilance, and prayer: "As many as I love I rebuke," is his language; "be zealous, therefore, and repent,"† "for I have not found thy works perfect before God."‡

His dominion is at the same time most gentle, gracious, and benign. Grace, as I have said, is the sceptre of his empire; and that grace is imparted by the Spirit. His reign is indeed "the reign of grace."§ He reveals his glory, he manifests ineffable majesty and beauty, whereby he captivates the hearts of his subjects, and "draws them with the cords of a man, and the bands of love."‖ With the most tender compassion he "delivers the needy when he crieth, the poor, and him that hath no helper. He spares the poor and the needy, and saves the souls of the needy:"¶ "When the poor and the needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."**

In earthly kingdoms the subjects are governed merely by general laws, which are of necessity very imperfectly adapted to the infinite variety of cases that occur. The combinations of human action are too numerous and diversified to be adequately included in any general regulation or enactment; whence has arisen the maxim, "*Summum jus summa injuria*,"—that a strict adherence to the letter of the law would often be the greatest injustice. But this divine dominion subsists under no such imperfections; for the Prince is intimately acquainted with the secrets of the heart. He also pervades every part of his empire by his presence, and can consequently make a specific and personal application to each individual; can impart his smiles and his favours, the expression of his kindness or of his displeasure, to each individual soul, as distinctly as though it were the only subject of his empire.

In human government the law extends to outward actions only, but the good and the evil which are produced by it are almost entirely confined to sensible objects—to such objects as bear a relation to our corporeal state.

* Matt. xvi. 27 † Rev. iii. 19. ‡ Rev. iii. 2. § Rom. v. 21.
‖ Hos. xi. 4. ¶ Psalm lxxii. 13. ** Isa. xli. 17, 18.

## XVII.

## ON SPIRITUAL LEPROSY.*

LEV. xiii. 45.—*And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean*

BY superficial thinkers it has been objected to several parts of the Mosaic law, that its injunctions are frivolous and minute, and of a nature that ill comports with the majesty and wisdom of the Supreme Being. The exact specification of the different sorts of sacrifice, the enumeration of the different sorts of creatures, clean and unclean, and the various species of ceremonial defilement, have been adduced as examples of this kind. To this it may be replied, that, at this distance of time, we know too little of the superstitions among pagan nations, and consequently of the peculiar temptations to which the ancient Israelites were exposed, to enable us to form an accurate judgment respecting the expediency or necessity of those provisions. Many legal enactments which appear unseasonable and unnecessary to a distant observer and a remote age, on close investigation of the actual circumstances in which they were, are discovered to be replete with propriety, and to be founded on the highest reason. But the most satisfactory answer to this, and to most other objections raised against the law of Moses, is derived from a consideration of the peculiar nature of that institute, which was throughout figurative and typical. In the infancy of revealed religion, and when the minds of men were but little accustomed to refined reflection, it became necessary to communicate moral and religious instruction by actions and observances, and to address their reason through the medium of their senses. The people of Israel, at the time they came out of the land of Egypt, having been long surrounded by idolatry, and in a state of depression and slavery, were a people, we have the utmost reason to believe, of very gross conceptions, deeply sunk in carnality and ignorance; a nation peculiarly disqualified to receive any lasting impression from didactic discourses, or from any sublime system of instruction. Their minds were in an infantine state; and divine wisdom was imparted to them, —not in that form which was best in itself, but in that in which they were best able to bear it: and being very much the creatures of sense, religious principles were communicated through the medium of sensible images. Thus they were reminded of the eternal difference between right and wrong, between actions innocent and criminal, by the distinction of animals and meats into clean and unclean. Their attention was called to a reflection on their guilt, on their just desert of destruction, and of the necessity of a real expiation of sin hereafter to be

* Preached at Leicester, December, 1810.

made in the person of the Saviour, by the institution of sacrifices, without the shedding of whose blood there was no remission. To convince them of the inherent defilement attached to sin, and of the necessity of being purified from it by a method of God's devising, it was enjoined that several incidents, such as touching a dead body, the disease of leprosy, and some others, should be considered as polluting the person whom they befell; in consequence of which they were pronounced unclean, and separated from the camp and the tabernacle. In allusion to the ceremonial uncleanness contracted by touching a dead body, St. Paul, that infallible interpreter of the import of the Mosaic law, styles evil dispositions "dead works."—"For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"*

To every instance of ceremonial defilement there are two circumstances attached.

1. The forfeiture of certain privileges, especially that of approaching God in his sanctuary.

2. A representation of the defiling nature of sin.

But of all the various sorts of ceremonial uncleanness, there is none which appears to have had so much a typical import as the case of leprosy, which, accordingly, occupies more room in the enactments of the Levitical law than all the others put together; and is treated of with a niceness of distinction, and a particularity of detail, peculiar to itself. Not less than two very long chapters of this book† are devoted to the ascertaining of the signs of this disease, and prescribing the methods of legal purification; so that no one who believes there is any thing whatever of a typical nature in the laws of Moses can doubt of the regulations respecting leprosy being emphatically so. It is my full conviction of this which has induced me to make it the ground of this discourse. If we set ourselves to inquire for what reason the leprosy was selected in the Mosaic ritual as the most eminent representation of moral defilement, we shall perceive there was something very singular in this affair. Besides its being fitted for this purpose as it was a very dreadful and loathsome disease, there is the utmost reason to believe it was supernatural. Those who have travelled into eastern countries make mention indeed of a distemper under the name of leprosy; but there is much room to doubt of its being the same which is treated of in the books of Moses. If you read the rules prescribed there for ascertaining its existence, you will find certain circumstances to which there is nothing parallel in any disease now existing in the world: for it attached itself, not only to the bodies of men, but to garments and to houses; it affected the very stones of buildings, fretting and consuming them.‡ A considerable part of the laws on this subject respect its subsistence in houses, which in certain

* Heb. ix. 13, 14. † Lev. xiii. xiv.

‡ Read carefully Lev. xiv. 34–45. Michaelis and others have endeavoured to prove that the leprosy of the Old Testament is, in no case, supernatural; but their reasonings are, in my judgment, far from satisfactory.—Ed.

cases were ordered to be completely demolished, and the materials cast into an unclean place without the city. It seems to have been inflicted by the immediate hand of God: "When ye be come into the land of Canaan, which I give to you for a possession," the Lord is introduced as saying, "and I put the plague of leprosy in a house of the land of your possession; and he that owneth the house shall come and tell the priest, saying, It seemeth to me there is as it were a plague in the house."* In various periods of the Old Testament history, we find it inflicted as an immediate judgment of God, as in the case of Moses, Miriam, Gehazi, and Uzziah. After it was cured, it was suffered sometimes to spread again. By this awful visitation the inhabitants of the house were forcibly reminded and admonished of their sins: and is it possible to conceive of a ceremony more adapted to strike a stupid and insensible people with awe?

The typical import of this kind of ceremonial defilement leads us to consider sin in the following lights:—

I. As an alarming, dreadful disease, for such the leprosy unquestionably was. There are spiritual diseases as well as bodily, and the former much more to be dreaded. These diseases may all be resolved into sin. As the human frame consists, not merely in a number of parts put together in the same place, but of parts vitally united, all with their separate functions and due subserviency to each other, which gives us the idea of a system; so the mind consists of faculties and powers designed to act under due subordination to each other. Sin disturbs this harmony, confounds this order, and consequently is truly and properly in the mind what disease is in the body. In the Holy Scriptures it is compared to the most afflicting disorders;—to blindness, deafness, lethargy; and the removal of it is expressed by healing. "Lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."† Sin is a fretting leprosy; it spreads itself throughout all the principles and powers; and [wherever it spreads imparts its own malignity.]

II. It defiles as well as disorders.—Like the leprosy, it is a most loathsome disease; it is *filthiness* of flesh and of spirit. "Cleanse thou me from secret faults."‡ "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."§

III. It cuts off those in whom it prevails from communion with God, both penally and naturally; that is, by the force of judicial sentence, and by its natural influence.

IV. To those who have just apprehensions of it, it will be productive of that sorrowful sense of guilt and unworthiness so forcibly expressed in the words of the text.

* Lev xiv. 34, 35. † Isa. vi. 10. John xii. 40. ‡ Psalm xix. 12. § Psalm li. 4.

# XVIII.

## ON SPIRITUAL LEPROSY.*

Lev. xiii. 45.—*And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean.*

In this discourse we propose to make an improvement of the two former, which treated of the spiritual import of the Mosaical law concerning lepers. Having shown that the ceremonial defilement incurred by leprosy was designed as a standing representation of the polluting nature of sin,—and the legal method of purification, a type of the manner in which the power and pollution of sin are removed under the gospel,—I shall proceed to attempt applying the whole doctrine to the character and circumstances of my hearers.

I. Let the doctrine be improved into an occasion of inquiring whether *we* are healed, or are yet under the leprosy of sin. When we hear of the ravages of so dreadful a disorder, supposing we give any sort of credit to the report, it is natural to inquire into our own situation, and to consider how far we are in danger of being overtaken with it. During the prevalence of an epidemic disorder, accompanied especially with symptoms of danger, prudent men are wont to manifest great solicitude to avoid the places and occasions of infection. In the case before us there is ground for much serious inquiry peculiar to itself. The leprosy of sin is not like some other disorders which affect some individuals alone, while others escape; it is a universal malady,—no child of Adam escapes it; it attaches to the whole human race; and the only persons who are not now involved in that calamity are such as are *cured*, *saved*, redeemed from among men;—terms which in their most obvious import imply the former prevalence of disease. The bitter fruits of human apostacy extend to each individual of the human race, as may be sufficiently inferred from the very appellation of Christ, the Saviour of the world,—"he shall be for salvation unto the ends of the earth,"†—as well as from the most express declarations of Scripture respecting the universal prevalence of guilt and corruption, in all instances where it has not been counteracted and controlled by divine grace: "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."‡

Since this is the case, if you are not now in a *state* of sin, yet, as you were so formerly, you have undergone a great change, and must consequently have some recollection of the circumstances attending it;

* Preached at Leicester, December, 1810 † Acts xiii. 47. ‡ Eph. ii. 3

and though you may not perhaps be able to specify the precise moment of your conversion, some traces must remain upon your memory of the circumstances connected with an event so replete with important consequences. In the course of our discussion on this subject we have observed, that the cure of sin must be preceded by a sense of the malady, by a humiliating conviction of defilement, urging us to cry with the leper, "Unclean, unclean." Did any ever witness in you this appearance of concern for sin, this apprehension of your misery as a guilty creature before God? Were you ever heard, we will not say to cry out in a public assembly, as did the three thousand that were converted by Peter, but in the most private intercourse with a Christian friend, and inquire what you must do to be saved? Are you conscious to yourselves of having ever felt serious and lasting solicitude on that head? Did it ever rest with a weight upon your mind at all proportioned to what you have felt on other occasions of distress? Was it ever allowed to put a check to your worldly amusements, to your gay diversions, or to the pursuit of any scheme whatever, from which you could promise yourselves profit or pleasure?

We will take occasion, in treating on the subject before us, to observe, that the only method of deliverance from the malady of sin is a devout and humble application to the Lord Jesus; for he, and he only, "shall save his people from their sins;"* and now, not less than in the days of his flesh, it is his prerogative to say, "I will, be thou clean."† Supposing you thus to have applied, and to have succeeded in your suit, you must have some remembrance of those solemn transactions between Christ and your soul. You can recall the season when you committed yourselves into the hands of the Redeemer; when, like the leper in the gospel, you fell at his feet, crying, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Your struggles after the Saviour, your attempts to believe, accompanied with prayer that he would help your unbelief, and the rest you have found in him after being tossed by the storm, cannot all have passed like the fleeting images of a dream, without leaving some traces in your mind not easily effaced. If you are conscious that nothing of this nature has taken place, if you recollect no such transactions, you may be assured they never took place.

Waiving, however, these points of inquiry, and admitting it to be possible that all this may have disappeared from your mind, still, since sin is a universal malady from which none are naturally exempted, if you are now healed, you must be conscious of your being very different from what you formerly were. Admitting you can give no account of the circumstances or time of your cure, yet you can at least say with him in the gospel, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." Your taste, inclination, and pursuits must have undergone a great alteration; and whereas you were formerly alienated from God, and took no delight in him, he is now your avowed and deliberate end, your chosen portion. Whereas you were formerly utterly disinclined to prayer, it is now your constant practice, and considered as a

* Matt i. 21. † Matt. viii. 3.

high privilege. "Led captive" formerly "by Satan at his will," borne away by the tide of sensual inclination or corrupt example, you now feel yourselves endowed with spiritual power, so as to overcome temptation; and having the seed of grace remaining, you keep yourselves that so "the wicked one toucheth you not." The Lord Jesus Christ, who appeared to you formerly "like a root out of a dry ground, without any beauty or comeliness in him for which you should desire him," is now in your eyes "the branch of the Lord, beautiful and glorious; the fruit of the earth, comely and pleasant." The knowledge of him, instead of being tasteless and insipid, you now find to be of so high and superlative excellence, that you account all things but loss in the comparison; nay, you esteem them "but dung, that you may win Christ." You feel, it may be, some remains of your ancient distemper; but you feel, at the same time, that its power is broken, that the prescriptions of your Physician have wrought kindly, and that you are not far off from a complete cure.

But if you are conscious of being strangers to all this, you may rest assured your disorder remains in its full force. Nor let any flatter themselves that things are well with them because their external conduct is decent and regular, and they are exempt from the grosser acts of immorality, while they remain alienated from God, forgetful of his presence, unawed by his authority, insensible to his goodness, strangers to his converse. In this alienation lies the very core and essence of sin; this is the "evil heart of unbelief departing from the living God;" this is the radical distemper of which the diversified forms of iniquity in men's lives are but the symptoms and effects. This aversion to God, this inaptitude to be influenced by considerations and motives derived from his blessed nature and holy will, is the seminal principle of all wickedness; it is the [universal,] the pervading malady which attaches to apostate spirits, as well as to apostate men, and the only one of which disembodied spirits are capable; and which [leagues] the disobedient and rebellious in all parts of the universe in one grand confederacy against God and goodness. Till this is subdued, nothing is in reality done towards the recovery of lost souls. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart;"* and in consequence of this that which is highly esteemed among men is, not unfrequently, an abomination in his sight. "There is," the Scriptures tell us, "a generation who are pure in their own eyes, but are not washed from their filthiness;"† and they who value themselves on the correct exterior of their conduct, while their heart is not turned to God, are precisely that generation.

II. The second improvement to which the subject naturally leads is, a reflection on the misery of those who are yet under the power and defilement of sin. Happy should we esteem ourselves, could we impress upon the consciences of such an adequate idea of their misery. "Then said" the prophet "Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, it shall be unclean. Then answered Haggai

* 1 Sam. xvi. 7. † Prov. xxx. 12.

and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the Lord; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean."*

To be under the power and pollution of sin is to be odious in the sight of God; and what inexpressible degradation is comprehended in this idea! For the eye of God's holiness to be averted from us, to have no share in his complacency, to be in a situation in which his essential attributes are engaged for our destruction, is a conception which, if you come to realize it, is replete with horror. To have "the wrath of God abiding on you" is a calamity which, one would suppose, must drink up your spirit, and completely destroy whatever satisfaction you might naturally derive from other objects. Till this plague is removed, cheerfulness is folly, and laughter is madness. However prosperous your outward condition, however successful your worldly pursuits, however ample your fortune, or elevated your rank, they are no just occasion of joy to you, any more than the garland which decorates the victim prepared for slaughter. "Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people: for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God."† There are many circumstances calculated to afford a degree of joy; the blessings so plenteously showered down on the path of life are adapted in themselves to exhilarate the heart, and to diffuse a ray of cheerfulness over the soul; but to him that is under the wrath of the Almighty, if they afford high gratification, it must be in consequence of his forgetfulness of his true situation. We should pity the insensibility of the man who could delight himself with the dainties of a feast, while a sword was suspended over his head by a single hair;‡ the danger of whose situation is, however, not to be compared with being every moment exposed to "the wrath of God." While you continue in your sins, you have not the shadow of security against overwhelming and hopeless destruction: at any moment, in the midst of your amusements, your business, your repose, whether at home or abroad, in company or in solitude, you are liable to the arrest of justice; to be cast out into that eternal prison from whence you can never escape "till you have paid the uttermost farthing." The Being that fills with his presence the immensity of space—the Being "in whom you live, and move, and have your being," who can crush you in a moment, and who has engaged to recompense his enemies, and "reward them that hate him," is incensed at you, and laughs at your insensibility, because he knows that your hour is coming.

III. The subject before us suggests the strongest motives for an immediate application to the methods of cure. Were sin a tolerable distemper, it might be endured; were it entirely or in every sense incurable, it must be submitted to. But as things are actually situated, there is no necessity for you to pine away in your iniquities; for though you cannot recover yourselves by any native unaided power of

* Haggai ii. 13, 14. † Hos. ix. 1

‡ See Horace, lib. iii. carm. 1.

"Districtus ensis cui super impia
Cervice pendet, non Siculæ dapes
Dulcem elaborabunt saporem."—Ed.

yours, though in this light your [hopelessness] be deep, and your wound incurable, yet there is a method of recovery revealed in the gospel, which millions have tried with success. "There *is* balm in Gilead, there is a Physician there."* By the discoveries it makes of the placability of the Divine Being, and the actual constitution of a Redeemer, the gospel is essentially a restorative dispensation. "It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."†

We have observed, in the course of our discussion of the subject, that the evils attached to sin are twofold: guilt, which is a legal obstruction to an approach to God, and renders the sinner liable to eternal death; and pollution, which disqualifies him for happiness.

To the former the blood of the Redeemer, "sprinkled upon the conscience," is a sovereign antidote: "the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin."‡ The great design of his coming into this world was to render that reparation to divine justice for the injury it had sustained by the transgressions of men, which it had been otherwise impossible to make; and thus, in consistency with the divine law, to admit repenting sinners to mercy. "Having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an High-priest over the house of God; let us draw near."§

With respect to the power and pollution of sin, its efficacy in retaining the soul in bondage; this also admits of relief in the gospel. There is a Spirit, we have often occasion to remind you, which can liberate the soul, and diffuse freedom, light, and purity through all its powers. "The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death."‖ "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."¶ If you are willing to be made clean, if you sincerely implore the savour of Divine grace, it will not long be withheld from you. "He will give his Holy Spirit unto them that ask him."** "If you will turn at his reproof, he will pour out his Spirit unto you, and make known his words unto you."†† "He is willing to heal your backslidings, to receive you graciously, and love you freely."‡‡

If you are so much in love with your distemper, indeed, as to determine, at all events, not to part with it, your case is hopeless; and nothing remains but for you to die in your sins, under the additional guilt you incur by refusing the remedy which Infinite Wisdom has prepared. At present, God is expostulating with you, in the language of an ancient prophet, "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayst be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?"§§ "Wo unto thee, O Jerusalem! wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?"‖‖

You have met with many occurrences calculated to bring your sin to your remembrance; in various respects God has walked contrary to you, and has probably often visited you with severe chastisements. Your bodies have been reduced by sickness, your families visited with

* Jer. viii. 22. † Rom. i. 16. ‡ 1 John i. 7. § Heb. x. 19-22
‖ Rom. viii. 2. ¶ 2 Cor. iii. 17. ** Luke xi. 13. †† Prov. i 23
‡‡ Hos. xiv. 4. §§ Jer. iv. 14. ‖‖ Jer. xiii. 27.

death; and under some of these strokes you were for a while stunned, and formed some feeble resolution of forsaking your sins, and devoting yourselves to a religious life. But what are the fruits? No sooner was the first smart of your affliction [abated,] than you returned to your course, and became as inattentive to the concerns of your soul as ever. God only knows whether he will grant you any more warnings; whether he will wait upon you any longer; whether he will ever again visit you in mercy; or whether he will pronounce on you that awful sentence recorded in Ezekiel,—"Because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee. I the Lord have spoken it; it shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent: according to thy ways and according to thy doings shall they judge thee, saith the Lord God."*

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## XIX.

### ON COUNTING THE COST.

LUKE xiv. 28.—*For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?*

AMONG the many excellences which distinguish the character of our Lord, as the author and founder of a new religion, we perceive, throughout the whole of his conduct, a most transparent simplicity and candour. He disdained, on any occasion, to take advantage of the ignorance or inexperience of the persons with whom he conversed; never stooping to the low arts of popularity, nor attempting to swell the number of his followers by a concealment of the truth. He availed himself of no sudden surprise, no momentary enthusiasm arising from the miracles which he wrought, or the benefits which he conferred. The attachment which he sought, and which he valued, was the result of mature conviction, founded on the evidence of his claims, and combined with a distinct foresight of the consequences, near and remote, which would follow from becoming his disciples. Conscious of the solidity of the foundation on which his title to universal and devoted obedience rested, he challenged the strictest scrutiny. Knowing that his promises would more than compensate all the sacrifices he might require, and all the sufferings to which his disciples might be exposed, he was not solicitous to throw a veil over either, but rather chose to set them in the strongest light, that none might be induced to enlist under his banners but such as were "called, and chosen, and faithful." He felt no desire to be surrounded by a crowd of ignorant and superficial admirers,

* Ezek. xxiv. 13, 14.

ready to make him a king to-day, and to cry, "Crucify him, crucify him," to-morrow; but by a band "whose hearts God had touched," prepared, through good and evil report, to follow him to prison and to death. Such, with the exception of one, were his twelve apostles; such the hundred and twenty disciples who were assembled at Jerusalem after his ascension; and such the character of those whom he will acknowledge as his at a future day.

Let me request your serious attention while, in dependence on Divine assistance, we attempt the improvement of this passage, by showing,

I. What is the *cost* attending the Christian profession.

II. Why it is necessary to *count* the cost: and,

III. The reasons which ought to determine our adherence to Christ, whatever that cost may be.

I. We are to consider the *cost* of the Christian profession. The cost attending [this profession] relates, either to what it requires us to renounce, or what we are to expect, or the term and duration of the engagement.

1. In order to be the disciples of Christ, there is much that we must instantly renounce. It is a profession of *holiness:* it therefore demands the immediate renunciation of criminal and forbidden pleasures. The moment we become Christ's disciples, we commence a warfare with the flesh, engaging for its crucifixion, with all its sinful lusts and appetites. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts."* To the severities of monastic discipline, in which the body is torn by scourges, and emaciated by abstaining from the nourishment required to sustain it in health and vigour, the religion of Christ is a stranger. "For every creature of God is good, if it be received with thanksgiving."† But a soft, voluptuous, and sensual life is repugnant, not only to the example of Christ, but to the whole genius and spirit of his institutes. By his gospel, and by his Son, God has "called us, not to *uncleanness*, but to holiness;‡ so that he that despiseth the precepts of purity despiseth not man, but God: "This is the will of God, even our sanctification, that every man should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; not in the lust of concupiscence, as the gentiles which know not God."§ However painful the sacrifice of forbidden gratifications may be, however deep and inveterate the habit of indulgence,—though it may seem as necessary to us, and as much a part of ourselves, as the right hand, or the right eye,—relinquished it must be, or we cannot be Christ's disciples. A life of sinful pleasure is not the life of a man, much less is it the life of a Christian: "He that liveth in pleasure" (it is the language of inspiration) "is dead while he liveth."‖ Let me urge every one present to count the cost in this particular, and if he is not firmly determined, in the strength of divine grace, "to abstain from those fleshly lusts which war against the soul," let him not pollute the name of the holy and immaculate Lamb of God by associating it with

* Gal. v. 24. † 1 Tim. iv. 4. ‡ 1 Thess. iv. 7
§ 1 Thess. iv. 3-5. ‖ 1 Tim. v. 6.

his own. Such an association is his abhorrence, which he will testify in a future day; and he will vindicate his insulted purity by a final renunciation and disclaimer, saying, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity: I never knew you."*

2. The Christian profession is *spiritual*, and therefore requires the renunciation of the world. The words of our Lord in this particular are decisive: "So, likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciple."† In the interpretation of these words, we must undoubtedly distinguish between the spirit and the letter. In the ordinary circumstances of the Christian profession, a literal compliance with this requirement would lead to pernicious consequences; to a relinquishment of the duties proper to our station, and a disorganization of society: but still they have an important meaning. They present the relation of a disciple to the present world in a very solemn and instructive light. They intimate, at the lowest estimate, that the relation he bears to the present state and world, is that of "a stranger and pilgrim;" that the relation in which it stands to him is that of an entire and absolute subordination to the glory of Christ and the interests of eternity. At the first opening of the gospel dispensation, the sacrifice of all secular advantages, the disruption of the tender ties which connect parents and children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, and the dearest friends, was not unfrequently the inevitable consequence of an adherence to Christ. The necessity of literally forsaking all was a usual appendage of the Christian profession. There was therefore a great propriety in placing the engagements of a disciple in this strong and forcible light, which, however, prescribe nothing more than what is irrevocably binding on us under similar circumstances. To regard every worldly interest, at all times, with an attachment subordinate to the love of Christ, to treasure up our chief happiness in him, and to be willing to "forsake all" whenever the following him renders it necessary, are absolutely essential to the becoming his disciples.

On this ground, my Christian brethren, let each of us try our religious pretensions. If you wish to carry into the Christian profession the weight of worldly encumbrance, a heart corroded by its passions, and agitated with its cares; if you are desirous of uniting the service of God and of Mammon, and think of presenting to Christ a few small relics of your time, occupied in the cold formalities of a dead and heartless religion, you cannot be his disciples. The world must be displaced from the throne, or Christ will not, cannot enter; since he will never condescend to occupy a subordinate place. Alas! what multitudes are there (there is reason to fear) who are fatally deceived in this particular; and who, while they form a high estimate of their character as Christians, have not "the Spirit of Christ," and are therefore "none of his!"‡

3. In order to be a disciple, it is necessary, in the concerns of conscience, to renounce every authority but that of Christ. The connexion

* Matt. vii. 23. † Luke xiv. 33 ‡ Rom. viii. 9.

of a Christian with the Saviour is not merely that of a disciple with his teacher; it is the relation of a subject to his prince. "One is your Master, even Christ."* "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me."† In the whole course of our lives, if we are indeed his disciples, we shall evince our allegiance by a conscientious observance of his laws, by an implicit submission to his will, together with a sincere desire of ascertaining more and more of his mind and purpose. "We shall call no man Master upon earth," nor dare to trifle with the least of his injunctions; and while we plead the merits of his death and the perfection of his righteousness as the alone ground of hope, we shall reverence him as a Sovereign, who is entitled to that spiritual, that interior obedience of the heart which is suited to the character of him who searches it. He who trusts in him as his Saviour must obey him as his Lord; nor shall any be washed in his blood who will not submit to his sceptre.

The moment Paul was brought to a saving acquaintance with Christ, he wrought in him a most profound sense of his majesty; a most humble and reverential submission to his will. His proud, intractable heart melted like wax before the sun, till, passive and subdued under the hand of Christ, he exclaims, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" While you prefer submission to any other yoke, while the dictates of any other authority have more power over you than the precepts of Christ, dream not of being his disciples. It is absolutely impossible.

4. The cost of which we are speaking relates to what we are to expect. In general, to commence the profession of a Christian is to enter upon a formidable and protracted warfare; it is to engage in an arduous contest, in which many difficulties are to be surmounted, many enemies overcome. The path that was trod by the great Leader is that which must be pursued by all his followers. If he found his way strewed only with flowers, if his career was cheered with acclamations and greeted with smiles, you may not unreasonably indulge in like expectations. But if his course, on the contrary, was a course of trial and effort, of affliction and discouragement; if a life of poverty and suffering, closed by a death of ignominy and agony, form the principal features of his history, regulate your expectations accordingly. "It is sufficient for the servant to be as his Master, the disciple as his Lord." "If they called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household." "Marvel not," saith our Lord, "if the world hate you; it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."‡ "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world, that in me ye might have peace."§

Though violent persecution is not an event, under the present circumstances of the Christian profession in this country, within the range

* Matt. xxiii 8. † John x. 27. ‡ John xv. 18, 19. § John xvi 33

et probability, yet serious and painful opposition may be expected. Vigorous attempts will be made to deprive you of your crown,—at one time by an assault on your doctrinal, at another by efforts to corrupt your practical, principles. A strong current will set in from the world to obstruct your progress, swelled by the confluence of false opinions, corrupt customs, ensnaring examples, and all the elements of vice, error, and impiety, which are leagued in a perpetual confederacy against God and his Christ. Your path will often be beset, not merely by the avowed patrons of error, but by such as "hold the truth in unrighteousness;" who, never having experienced the renovating power of divine truth, will be among the first and foremost to ridicule and oppose its genuine influence. While you live like the world, you may with impunity think with the church; but let the doctrines you profess descend from the head to the heart, and produce there the contrition, the humility, the purity, the separation from the world which distinguish the new creature, that world will be armed against you. "They think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you."* In order to stand your ground, it will be requisite for you to "quit yourselves like men, and be strong." Aware that he is everywhere and at all times surrounded with danger, the life of a Christian is a life of habitual watchfulness; in solitude, in company; at home, abroad; in repose and in action; in a state of suffering, or a state of enjoyment; in the shade of privacy, or in the glare of publicity. Aware of his incessant liability to be ensnared, he feels it incumbent on him to watch. The melancholy history of the falls of Noah, of David, and of Peter is adapted and designed to teach us this lesson.

An opportunity may present itself perhaps, in your future course, of growing suddenly rich, of making at least a considerable accession to your property; but it involves the sacrifice of principle, the adoption of some crooked and sinister policy, some palpable violation of the golden rule; or, to put it in the most favourable light, such an immersion of your mind in the cares and business of the world as will leave no leisure for retirement, no opportunity for "exercising yourself unto godliness," no space for calm meditation and the serious perusal of the Scriptures. Are you prepared in such a conjuncture to reject the temptation; or are you resolved at all events to make haste to get rich, though it may plunge you into the utmost spiritual danger? "Count the cost;" for with such a determination you cannot be Christ's disciple.

By the supposition with which we set out, you have solemnly renounced the indulgence of sinful pleasures. But recollect that siren will return to the charge, she will renew her solicitations a thousand and a thousand times; she will sparkle in your eyes, she will address her honeyed accents to your ears, she will assume every variety of form, and will deck herself with a nameless variety of meretricious embellishments and charms, if haply at some one unguarded moment she may entangle you in those "fleshly lusts which war against the soul."

* 1 Pet. iv. 4.

"Count the cost." Are you prepared to shut your eyes, to close your ears, and to persist in a firm, everlasting denial?

You will meet with injuries and unjust provocations: "count the cost" in this respect.

5. The cost of the Christian profession stands related to the *term* and duration of the engagement—"Be thou faithful unto death." It is coeval with life.

II. Why, we say, is it expedient for those who propose to become Christians to "count the cost?"

1. It will obviate a sense of ridicule and of shame. (See the context.)

2. It will render the cost less formidable when it occurs.

3. If it diminishes the number of those who make a public and solemn profession, this will be more than retrieved by the superior character of those who make it. The church will be spared much humiliation; Satan and the world deprived of many occasions of triumph.

III. The reasons which should determine our adherence to Christ, notwithstanding the cost which attends it.

1. His absolute right to command or claim our attachment.

2. The pain attending the sacrifices necessary to the Christian profession greatly alleviated from a variety of sources.

3. No comparison between the cost and the advantages.

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## XX.

## PARALLEL BETWEEN THE WAR WITH THE CANAANITISH NATIONS, AND THAT OF BELIEVERS WITH THEIR SPIRITUAL ENEMIES.*

JOSHUA v. 13–15.—*And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over-against him, with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay: but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.*

JOSHUA was at this time entering upon a most arduous undertaking; that of attacking the nations of Canaan, at the command of God, with a view to put the Israelites in possession of that land which God had sworn to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, he would bestow on their posterity. Joshua had just been invested with the office of the leader

* Preached at Leicester, March 1st

of the chosen people in the room of Moses, who was dead; he had witnessed their frequent rebellions against his predecessor, who had claims to their obedience peculiar to himself; and he had great reason to apprehend that the spirit of perverseness and insubordination, which occasioned so much uneasiness, would burst out against him with additional violence. Add to this, the enterprise on which he was entering was in itself extremely difficult and formidable.

The miraculous appearance presented to him on this occasion was probably intended to obviate his fears, and to arm him with an undaunted resolution in accomplishing the arduous duties assigned him. It is generally agreed by the most judicious commentators, that the personage who presented himself to Joshua at this time was no other than he who afterward became incarnate,—"the Son of God," "the Angel of the Covenant," and "the Captain of our salvation." From his commanding Joshua to pull his shoes from off his feet, assuring him the ground whereon he stood was holy, he could not fail to infer that he who addressed him was a Divine person; these being the identical words addressed to Moses when God appeared to him in the burning bush.*

We may learn from various passages in the New Testament, that the Lord Jesus Christ in his pre-existent state presided over the Jewish nation, conducted it through the wilderness, and communicated that spirit of inspiration by which its succession of prophets was actuated.

It is to those divine manifestations of himself in the ancient church there is reason to believe St. Paul refers, when, contrasting the pre-existent state of Christ with his appearance while on earth, he attributes to him the form of God, "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God."†

Nothing can be conceived more adapted to support the mind of this great man of God, and enable him to encounter every obstacle with fortitude, than such a divine manifestation; by which he was assured the Son of God himself undertook the conduct of the war, and the discomfiture of his foes.

The certainty of God being engaged on their side is, in every age, the chief support of the Christian Israel, in the conflict they are called to sustain with their spiritual enemies.

The present state of the church of God is justly styled a militant state, which is the chief distinction between its present and future condition. An everlasting victory is in prospect, when all enemies will be placed under its feet. In the mean while, whoever belongs to the true Israel of God is engaged in the serious and momentous contest, which bears in many points a striking and designed resemblance to the wars which the tribes of Israel under the conduct of Joshua waged with the inhabitants of Canaan.

As I conceive, if we attempt to trace a resemblance, it may possibly minister to our instruction and improvement, I shall confine the following discourse to that point.

* Exod. iii. 5. † Phil. ii. 6.

I. The war in which the tribes of Israel were engaged was of Divine appointment. It was a holy war,—not originating in the enmity or ambition of the people who undertook it, but in the sovereign will and pleasure of God, who had promised ages back to put them in possession of the land of Canaan; but resolved, for the wisest ends, that the actual possession of it should be the fruit of conquest.

The warfare in which Christians are engaged, in like manner, is of Divine prescription; it is one to which they are solemnly called. The enemies they are called to combat are God's enemies; and it is his will that we shall yield ourselves as instruments in his hand for their destruction.

In resisting the world, the flesh, and the devil, we are executing his commands, and are consecrating our services to the Most High. To be resolute and determined in this warfare is to enter into the very essence of our Christian calling; and it is the principal test of our fidelity and allegiance to the King of kings. Our Saviour has distinctly exhibited them in his word, has set us in battle array against them, and says to us, These are my enemies, and also yours, and you must destroy them.

While we remain in a state of unregeneracy, we are scarcely aware of the existence of these enemies. We have no apprehension of danger, and consequently seem to ourselves to be in a [region] of peace and safety. But no sooner are the "eyes of the understanding enlightened," than a new scene presents itself, and we perceive ourselves to be encompassed with foes, and are at once convinced that no representation of the Christian calling is more just than that which likens it to a warfare.

II. The nations of the Canaanites, whom the Israelites were commanded to expel, were extremely numerous and formidable. So they appeared to the spies who were sent by Moses to search out the land. "The land," say they, "floweth with milk and honey: nevertheless, the people be strong, and the cities are walled, and very great: and we saw the children of Anak there. We be not able to go up against this people, for they are stronger than we; all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature; and there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight."*

Moses himself frequently reminds the Israelites of the obligations they will be under to love and serve God, when he shall have "subdued under them nations stronger and more numerous than they."

Here we may infer with certainty, that there was naturally no proportion between the strength of the Israelites and that of the people they were appointed to subdue. The victory to which they aspired was not to be achieved by their own power;—they were encouraged by the assurance that the Lord would fight for them,—which is abundantly verified in the events recorded in the book of Joshua. Thus the enemies which obstruct our salvation are numerous and formidable, for exceeding our active powers of resistance; so that we could

* Num. xiii 27, 31-33

entertain no hope of success, were we abandoned to our own unassisted efforts.

Who could flatter himself with the expectation of vanquishing the assaults and escaping the snares of his great adversary; quelling the motions of the flesh, and overcoming the temptations of the world, if he had no hope of superior succour? Never were forces brought into the field more unequally matched, than the power and subtlety of Satan, enforced by the influence of the world and the treachery and corruption of our own hearts, and the naked, unaided efforts of a feeble worm.

When we consider the perfect subjection to which the far greater part of mankind are reduced under these their spiritual enemies, and the havoc and destruction they are continually making of souls, we shall be convinced of the propriety of Scripture language, when it speaks of "the powers of darkness;" "To turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." These enemies have triumphed over the greatest potentates, have held in invisible chains the greatest of men, and tyrannized, with little or no resistance, over those who have been the terror of the mighty in the land of the living.

III. God was pleased to assign to the people of Israel a leader who, under God, was to marshal their forces and direct their operations. The name of this great captain was, by divine authority, called Joshua, his original name was Hoshea; but when he was marked out for the office he afterward sustained, it was changed into JOSHUA, by inserting one of the letters of the tetragram, or the incommunicable name, into his, to denote his partaking of the Spirit, and being invested with a portion of the authority of God.

The word *Joshua* imports a Saviour, and it is precisely the same in the Hebrew with that which was given to our Saviour, because he was to "save his people from their sins."

Under the conduct and command of this great captain it was that the people of Israel were to expect victory, and to him they were commanded to pay implicit obedience.

In leading the church militant, Jesus Christ, who is by name and by import the true Joshua, is appointed to the supreme command; and one of the most distinguishing characters under which he appears is that of "the Captain of our salvation."* He said to Joshua, "As captain of the Lord's host am I come," and he is set up and proclaimed as the great antagonist of Satan, and of the powers of darkness; and it is only under his auspices, and in consequence of being strengthened and sustained by him, that we can indulge the hope of victory.

His "grace is sufficient for us; his strength is made perfect in our weakness."† "I can do all things," said St. Paul, "through Christ, which strengtheneth me."‡ He is given as a "leader and commander to the people."§ He appeared to John in the Apocalypse, under the character of leader of the hosts of God. "And I saw heaven opened,

* Heb. ii. 10. † 2 Cor. xii. 9. ‡ Phil. iv. 13. § Isaiah lv. 4.

and beheld a white horse; and he that sat thereon was called faithful and true, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war: and the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations."*

From him supernatural succours are derived to all who are enlisted under his banner. "All power is given to him in heaven," for the express purpose that he may give eternal life to all his followers; and if "the sun stood still in Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon," the whole course of nature is under the control of Christ, and all the operations of Providence are rendered subservient to the salvation and victory of his church. And Christians are not dismayed at the powers and numbers of their adversaries, as often as they realize the character of their leader, who is able to make them "more than conquerors."†

As it is frequently remarked in the history of the conquest of Canaan that the Lord fought for Israel, so it may be equally affirmed at present with respect to the church of God.

IV. The war with the Canaanites was a *bellum internecinum*—a war which was never to be terminated but in the destruction of the inhabitants. Having exhausted the patience of God by their crimes and impieties, he was resolved to cut them off, and was pleased to employ his chosen people as the instruments in accomplishing the purposes of his justice. Hence they were strictly prohibited from making any league or truce with them, or seeking their peace or prosperity in any shape whatever. How often are they admonished with respect to the duty of declining affinity with them, and of contracting any social ties!

The character of this war was peculiar to itself, in its not being intended to recover violated rights, or to procure indemnity for past injuries, or security against future; but to vindicate the cause of God against the incorrigible, and to exhibit them as examples of divine retribution. Regard to the interests of those who engaged was not the only or the prevailing principle of this war. In all these respects it exhibits a striking figure of the warfare the church of God is called to maintain with its spiritual enemies.

Like that waged with the Canaanites, no suitable measures are to be relaxed, no idea of concession or treaty admitted, no thought indulged of future amity and reconciliation. Our eyes must not pity, nor our hands spare; no tenderness must be indulged towards our spiritual enemies, no thought admitted but of pursuing them to destruction. We are to "crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts;"‡ to mortify, or, in other words, put to death our members that are in the earth, to endeavour that "the body of sin may be destroyed, that henceforth we shall not serve sin."§

As the people of Israel were forbidden to inquire in what name the Canaanites had served their gods, and were not to take their name into their lips; so Christians are to have no communion with the "unfruitful

* Rev xix. 11-15. † Rom viii. 37. ‡ Gal. v 24. § Rom. 6

works of darkness" but to "reprove them," while "fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness, which is idolatry, are not to be so much as named among them, as becometh saints."* Every fibre of corruption is, if possible, to be extirpated, every part of the old man to be laid aside, "old things" universally renounced, and "all things to become new." Hostilities are never to cease till the enemy perishes out of the land.

V. Though God could easily have destroyed the Canaanites at once, though he could have crowned [his people] with immediate and decisive victory; yet he chose rather to do it, as he informs them by Moses, "by little and little."

He adopted this method to exercise more fully their faith and patience. "I will not drive them out from before thee in one year, lest the land become desolate, and the beasts of the field multiply against thee. By little and little will I drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land."†

For wise and mysterious ends, in like manner, he permits his church to attain but a gradual victory. It is by slow degrees, and by a long succession of conflicts, that conquest is achieved: the force of the enemy is gradually weakened, and it is long ere the church is permitted completely to rest from its toils.

VI. To suffer our spiritual enemies to remain unsubdued is uniformly productive of effects analogous to those which the Israelites were warned to expect from sparing the Canaanitish nations. "They shall be as pricks in your eyes, and goads in your sides, because you will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you. Then it shall come to pass that those which ye let remain of them shall be as pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell. Moreover, it shall come to pass that I shall do unto you as I thought to do unto them."‡ It is one thing to suffer our enemies to remain unmolested, and another to commiserate their existence.

There are seasons when the Christian, overdone with continual opposition, is ready to yield himself to the love of ease, and, relaxing in his opposition and vigilance, permits the enemy to gain some advantages; but if he hopes thereby to procure lasting tranquillity, he is greatly mistaken. There is that irreconcilable hatred between the principle of grace and the principle of corruption, between the new and the old man, Christ and Satan, that nothing is gained by an attempt to compromise their differences, or amicably to adjust their claims.

Our spiritual enemies are never capable of being softened by indulgence, of becoming neutral, much less of being converted into friends. They will be incessantly plotting our destruction, and watching for our unguarded moments, in order to catch every possible advantage of us; and the only safe way is [for us also] to be always on the watch, always distrustful of them, and hostile.

The people of Israel might have rid themselves much more

* Eph. v. 3. † Exod. xxiii. 29, 30. ‡ Num. xxxiii. 55, 56, &c

completely of their enemies, had they availed themselves more diligently of their first advantages. Afterward their enemies were suffered to remain for their trial.*

VII. The people were dismayed at the report of the spies: a lively resemblance to the conduct of too many who set out towards the heavenly Canaan, but in the contest suffer themselves to be dismayed.

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## XXI.

### ON THE LAW OF GOD IN THE HEART.

PSALM XXXVII. 31.—*The law of God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.*

THE temporary prosperity of the wicked has in every age afforded a trial to the faith and patience of the righteous. Often are they doomed to behold the contemner of God "flourishing like a green bay-tree," abounding in sensual pleasures and luxurious enjoyments, and elated with pride, as though the world were made only for them; while such as fear his name are crushed under the rod of power, and subjected to the greatest privations and sufferings. Such is the scene of providence, a scene which appears to have given birth to the composition of this psalm, in which the impatience and discontent which such a spectacle is apt to occasion is corrected, the brevity of the worldly prosperity of the wicked is foretold, and the final happiness and triumph of the righteous is asserted. The [righteous] are assured of the powerful protection of the Supreme Being, whose favour they at present enjoy; whose wisdom is continually, though invisibly, operating in securing their future good. "The Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever."†

In opposition to the transient prosperity and the fugitive pleasures enjoyed by the wicked, the righteous are distinguished by the possession of permanent principles and unfading prospects. He is upheld by an invisible but abiding power, and his character and conduct partake of the unchangeableness which belongs to his interior principles: "The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide."

By "the law," in this passage, it is probable we are to understand the word of God in general, with a particular reference to the preceptive part, in the same sense as it must undoubtedly be taken throughout the 119th Psalm. The preceptive part forms so essential a branch of

* Judges ii. 2, 3. 21–23 † Psalm xxxvii. 28, 29

every system of revelation, that it may with great propriety impart its peculiar name to the whole, agreeably to which even the gospel is denominated "the law of faith."*

These words present us, first, with a view of the internal principle which actuates a good man,—"*the law of God is in his heart;*" next, with its effects on his external character and conduct,—"*none of his steps shal slide.*"

I. The inward principle which actuates him: "the law of God is in his heart." This implies,

1. An acquaintance with the law, considered as the standard of holiness, as the rule of action. A precept may be known which is not obeyed; but it is impossible it should be obeyed when it is not known. Nor will ignorance of the will of God excuse the disobedient; since such ignorance must be voluntary, the consequence of "loving darkness rather than light." The time is long past when such a pretence might have been urged with some plausibility. That period is elapsed when it was necessary for men "to feel after God," like persons who grope in search of an object in the dark. "The day hath dawned, the day-star hath risen," the light of revelation shines with a brilliant effulgence, and the path of duty [is] made so plain, that the "wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein."† When ignorance of the will of the Great Supreme arises from inattention, from carnal security, from a passive indifference whether he be pleased or displeased; instead of mitigating, it aggravates the guilt of disobedience. "They are a people," saith the prophet, "of no understanding: therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, he that formed them will show them no favour."‡ How different is it with the good man! "As the eyes of servants look unto their masters, and the eyes of a maiden into the hand of her mistress; so his eyes wait upon the Lord;" that he may attend to his directions and receive his orders. Conscious that he is made for God, he carefully explores his will, and he "meditates on his law day and night."

By a careful perusal of the sacred volume, by diligently weighing and pondering the precepts of revelation, he is constantly enlarging his conceptions of duty, and arriving nearer and nearer to a full and perfect comprehension of the spirit and import of its sacred injunctions. His fear of God is not taught by the commandments of men, stands not in human observances and will-worship, but in a solid acquaintance with the dictates of inspiration. Hence the service he presents is a reasonable one, the offspring of an enlightened faith, such as it is becoming man to offer, and God to accept.

By seriously applying the mind to the exhortations and injunctions of the sacred page, a good man arrives at a "quick understanding in the fear of the Lord," and his senses are "exercised to discern between good and evil."

2. The man of God is distinguished by an habitual [reference] to his mind and will. He is not merely acquainted with it as a branch

* Rom. iii. 27. † Isaiah xxxv. 8. ‡ Isaiah xxvii. 11.

of speculation, which serves to extend his knowledge, and to recommend itself to his understanding, while it seldom mingles with the ordinary current of his thoughts; it is not merely deposited in that department of his mind which seems a cabinet for the preservation of what is curious, rather than the reception of that which he has daily occasion to use. The precepts of God occupy much of his thoughts, and engage much of his attention. The knowledge of them is continually revived, the remembrance of them refreshed, by daily mental recollections, by reiterated acts of attention, such as it becomes us to exert towards the counsels and ordinances of the Great Eternal. It is thus, and thus only, that knowledge becomes practical and influential; that the light which first pervades the intellect descends into the heart, and diffuses itself through all the faculties of the soul.

"And these words," said Moses, "which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."*

The original word is extremely expressive,—"thou shalt whet them on thy children," [or whet thy children upon them,] in allusion to the practice of giving the necessary edge to certain instruments, by continual friction with hard substance. Thus a good man whets the word of God on his own mind [so as to sharpen it] by successive acts of serious attention, [and thus acquires] an aptitude in applying it to its proper purpose. In the most busy and tumultuous scenes of life, it naturally occurs to his recollections, it instantaneously presents itself to his thoughts; while to the wicked the "judgments of the Lord are far above out of his sight," and it is with great difficulty that he raises his mind to such high and holy meditations, and, after all, it is a painful and short-lived effort.

3. The good man is impressed with a deep sense of the obligation of the law of God, accompanied with a sincere resolution of implicit and unreserved obedience. He is not only acquainted with the rules of duty, he does not merely make them the object of his serious and habitual attention: he accedes to the justice of their claims; his conscience is enlightened to discern their equity and their obligation; and he humbly but firmly resolves, in the strength of divine grace, to yield a practical compliance. Far from arraigning the precepts of God as too strict, too extended, or too spiritual, he entirely acquiesces in their justice and propriety, and turns the edge of his censure and reproaches on himself only. "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!" He is perfectly satisfied that, however he may be "carnal, sold under sin," "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."† He blames himself only, not the strictness of the precept; he laments the weakness and corruption of the flesh, not the purity of the divine command. Although he perfectly despairs of yielding such an obedience to its requisitions as shall justify him in the sight of God, he maintains a steady and conscientious respect to

* Deut. vi. 6, 7 † Rom. vii. 12.

all his commandments. "Thy word," saith David, "is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments."*

Holy resolutions are essential to a sincere obedience: they may become abortive by being framed in our own strength, and without "counting the cost; but, notwithstanding, they are a necessary preparation to the conscientious performance of duty. Nothing is more certain than that real religion is a reasonable and voluntary service: he will never truly serve God who is not deliberately resolved to do so. Good resolutions bear the same relation to [upright conduct] as the seed bears to the fruit.

All this, however, of itself, is indeed sufficient to form a slave, not a child—to produce a constrained and reluctant obedience, not the cheerful homage of a heart flowing with gratitude and love. The understanding may be enlightened, conscience awakened, and the external conduct reputable; while the service of God is felt as an insupportable load, with difficulty sustained, though impossible to be shaken off.

Something more is requisite to render religion a delight, to convert wisdom's ways into "ways of pleasantness," and her paths into "paths of peace."

4. To put the finishing stroke, then, to the character of a good man, let me add, once more, that his heart is inspired with a love to the law of God after the "inner man." Considered as a transcript of the divine perfections, as an expression of [God's] immaculate holiness, as the instrument of his sanctification, it is the object of his devoted attachment. The dispositions which it enforces are wrought into his heart; the inward bias of his mind is directed towards the holiness which it prescribes; and so intense is his approbation of all its requisitions, that the least alteration in it would give him pain. He longs not to have the standard of duty reduced to his level, but to have his own heart raised to its elevation. He would not wish for a law which connived at impurity, which commanded any thing short of moral perfection. [Its] immaculate holiness to him forms its principal attraction.

It is also entitled to our warmest attachment on account of its beneficial tendency; it is adapted, in the highest degree, to correct every moral irregularity, and to diffuse order and happiness throughout the whole creation. In proportion as it is obeyed, it never fails to ensure the "peaceable fruits of righteousness."

Hence those passionate expressions of attachment to the holy precepts of God which abound in the writings of David, and particularly in the 119th Psalm. "O how love I thy law!" "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times." "I will speak of thy testimonies before kings, and will not be ashamed: and I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate on thy statutes."

* Psalm cxix. 105, 106.

Its precepts may often do violence to the inclinations of flesh and blood, may often urge to laborious duties and painful sacrifices; sinful pleasures may be [desired,] which unsanctified natures find as difficult to part with as to "cut off a right hand, or to pluck out a right eye;" but still the manifest equity of its requisitions, and their evident subserviency to our best, our eternal interest, is such, that they are cordially approved. A congeniality of mind with the tenor of the divine precepts is experienced; whence arises a practical compliance, not so much the fruit of necessity, as the effect of inward vital principle. Herein is fulfilled the gracious declaration of the new covenant—"But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."* This is the great work of the Spirit on the souls of the faithful, the seal of God on the heart of his servants, and the distinguishing feature in the character of his children. Their love to the law produces grief at seeing it violated. "Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law."†

5. In a good man, this attachment to the law of God and to the rules of duty is progressive, and with every accession of religious experience, becomes more vigorous and confirmed. The farther he advances in his Christian course, the more deeply he is convinced that his prosperity is inseparably allied to obedience, that his spiritual enjoyments rise or fall in proportion as he walks more or less closely with his God. "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee."‡

"Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way which thou shouldst go. O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea."§

II. Its effects on his character and conduct: "none of his steps shall slide." His steps shall not fatally slide; he shall maintain a uniform and consistent deportment.

1. The violence of temptation shall not overpower him.
2. The suddenness of it shall not surprise him.
3. The deceitfulness of it shall not seduce him.
4. The example of the multitude shall not prevail.

* Jer. xxxi. 33 † Psalm cxix. 53. ‡ Psalm lxxxi. 13, 14, 16. § Isa. xlviii. 17, 18

# XXII.

## ON PRAYER FOR THE INCREASE OF FAITH.

LUKE xvii. 5.—*And the apostle said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.*

WE have here an example of prayer addressed to Christ, which implies an acknowledgment of his divinity, since it is a received principle of Scripture that God only is the proper object of prayer.

It is the more deserving of our attention on account of its being a prayer for a spiritual blessing, and that a blessing of prime importance; nor could it, with any propriety, be presented to one who was not conceived to have immediate access to the mind. However wavering or confused the apprehension the apostles entertained of Christ's personal dignity might be during the continuance of his ministry on earth, it seems evident, from this instance, that there were seasons when they felt a lively conviction of his divinity, under which they ascribed to him a sovereign power over the heart.

From the reply which our Saviour makes to this petition, it is probable it more immediately respected that faith of miracles with which the apostles were in some measure endued, and which was greatly strengthened and enlarged after the day of Pentecost. The weakness of that faith they had on some occasions experienced, when persons afflicted with maladies were brought to them and they were not able to effect their cure.* A circumstance of this nature, it is possible, had recently occurred, which gave rise to this request.

Whatever particular species of faith might be designed in the words of the apostle now before us, we shall beg leave to consider faith, in the present discourse, in its more ordinary acceptation, in which it denotes a persuasion of divine truth, founded on the testimony and produced by the Spirit of God.

The faith of which we shall speak is that cordial assent to the testimony of God which distinguishes all regenerate persons, and which is defined by St. Paul, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."† Faith, in the New Testament, is applied solely to the exercise of the mind on the divine testimony. It denotes a reliance on the veracity and faithfulness of God,—his veracity respecting the truth of what he has affirmed, his faithfulness in the accomplishment of what he has promised. Hence it differs from sense and reason. Of the objects of the former we gain a knowledge by immediate experience, by their direct impressions on the bodily organs; of those which fall within the province of the latter, we arrive at a conviction by a process of argument more or less simple. Faith, on the contrary, is a reliance on the truth of what God has declared simply because he has declared it. It implies a revelation of his mind and

* Luke ix. 40. † Heb. xi. 1.

will, and the principle on which i founds the assurance of whatever it embraces is this, that the Supreme Being can neither deceive his creatures nor be deceived. It converses with supernatural verities, that is, with truths which are not capable of being ascertained by sense, or demonstrated by reason.

In our present discourse we shall confine ourselves to two observations.

I. That genuine faith admits of degrees.

II. That an increase of faith is, on every account, highly desirable

I. Where faith is genuine and sincere, it is yet susceptible of different degrees. Considered with respect to the number of the truths embraced, it is obvious at first sight that the faith of one Christian may be far more extensive than that of another. Though every real Christian embraces the whole revelation of God, and has consequently an implicit confidence in all the declarations contained in it, yet the knowledge of one may extend to many more particulars than that of another: a more accurate acquaintance with the Scriptures may bring before the view some truths of which the other entertains no conception. The religious belief of one may be confined to first principles, while that of another includes also the higher and more refined mysteries of Christianity. Considered in this light, none can doubt of the possibility of an increase of faith; though, strictly speaking, such an enlargement of the view may be more properly denominated an increase of knowledge.

An increase of faith respects more immediately further development of the principle itself, a greater force of persuasion, a more unshaken confidence in revealed truth, accompanied with a more uncontrolled ascendency of it over the heart. The strength of Abraham's faith is described, not as consisting in the extent of the truths it embraced, but in the force and vigour of his persuasion of the Divine promises. It is opposed to his "staggering through unbelief." A persuasion of the same divine truths, even when it is cordial and sincere, may admit of augmentation. The power and grace of the Redeemer, for example, by which "he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him,"* are cordially believed by all Christians;—but they are apprehended with different measures of clearness and force: with some they are sufficient to imbolden them to venture upon him with trembling hope; with others they produce the full assurance of faith, accompanied with "joy unspeakable and full of glory."† The transcendent love of the Redeemer, in dying for us, is truly apprehended and sincerely believed by all true Christians; but the views which they entertain of it are very different in depth and impression. As the same object may be seen under different lights, so the same truths may be contemplated with distinct degrees of evidence and brightness. To "perfect that which is lacking in your faith."‡ "Your faith groweth exceedingly."§ "But having hope, when your faith is increased."‖

By the nature of things, the light of faith must ever be inferior to that of vision; it can never fully reach, in its power over the heart, the perfection of sight, and, consequently, will never make us equally

* Heb. vii. 25. † 1 Pet. i 8 ‡ 1 Thess iii 10. § 2 Thess. i. 13. ‖ 2 Cor. x 15

happy or holy with those who "see as they are seen, and know as they are known." There is a limit to which it can never reach, but it may make nearer and nearer approaches to it. These things, on which the faith of a Christian is exercised, may be considered as twofold; consisting either of objects revealed which have a present subsistence, or promises of future good. The character and perfections of the blessed God, the office and work of the Redeemer, the dignity of his person, the efficacy of his blood, and the prevalence of his intercession, belong to the former. The light of faith makes this known to us; and this light is progressive, and by it we may attain to still higher and more transforming views of God and the Redeemer.*

## XXIII.

### SECOND DISCOURSE ON PRAYER FOR THE INCREASE OF FAITH.

LUKE xvii. 5.—*Lord, increase our faith.*

THE advantages resulting from an increase of faith.

I. As they respect ourselves.

II. As they regard the Supreme Being.

I. As they respect ourselves. It will have powerful influence in increasing our religious enjoyments. One grand design of Christianity is to make mankind happy by diminishing that portion of vexation of spirit which cleaves to all earthly things. "These things have I spoken unto you," said our blessed Lord, "that your joy might be full."† But the degree of this joy will be proportioned to the measure of our faith.

1. An increase of faith will effectually deliver us from distressing doubts respecting our state. As light makes all other things manifest, so it makes itself. While faith is "like to a grain of mustard-seed,"‡ it may be difficult to be discerned; but when it becomes more matured, it will be easily perceivable.

2. The things of God are so transcendently excellent and glorious, that the more lively our apprehension of them, the more happy we shall necessarily be. The more we see of God in Christ, the more we shall be conscious of a surpassing beauty in those objects that will eclipse the whole world in our view. The all-sufficiency and unchangeableness, the goodness, holiness, and truth of the Great Eternal, viewed by faith, will fill the mind with the most exalted satisfaction. The glory of the visible heavens and of the earth is nothing more than the reflection, or rather the shadow, of this glory. If the contemplation of created truth and goodness, developed in the

* This and the following sermon were preached in June, 1810.
† John xv. 11 ‡ Matt. xiii. 31.

actions of man, affords so high a satisfaction,—if it is sufficient, in its brightest display, to excite rapture,—how much more [will the mind be] fired in meditating by faith on the original, unchanging, and eternal truth and goodness! If to trace the counsels of princes, [to observe] the masterly strokes of wisdom and address evinced in the management of the concerns of earthly kingdoms [give pleasure,] how much more ravishing to have laid open to our view the counsels of the King of kings,—to be allowed to behold the deep things of God—the contrivance of that covenant which is ordered in all things and sure—the thoughts of his heart, which endure to all generations! How delightful to see the footsteps of divine grace in ancient times, the gradual preparations for the coming of Christ, the types and shadows of the law preparing the way for preaching the Cross, and the preaching of the Cross succeeded by the vision of eternal glory! If to contemplate some stupendous work of God fills the mind with admiration and delight, how much more to dwell by faith on the mediation of Him who is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person,"* assuming our nature, carrying our sins up with him to the cross, rising from the dead, sitting at the right-hand of God, ever living to make intercession, diffusing his Spirit and scattering his graces among the children of men. Who that knows any thing of such an object can be content without wishing to know more of him? Who will not be disposed to look on all things else as dross and dung when compared to such an object?

To feel the steady illumination of faith is to dwell in a calm and holy light; and if it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the natural light, how much more to behold this light of God, which sheds an incomparably sweeter ray; which reveals his face, brings near his love, and lays open the prospects of eternity! Guided by this light, you will be conducted to the abode of the celestial city, when a view will be opened into paradise, and you will hear, with John, "the voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of harpers harping with their harps, and crying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."†

1. An increase of faith will deliver us from the perplexity which springs from a state of mind unsettled in religion.

2. It will have an extensive influence on our sanctification.

(1.) The joys of faith will diminish your sensibility of the pleasures of sin. The pure and certain satisfaction which springs from spiritual views will indispose you to relish the polluted gratifications of sense: the satisfaction to be derived from earthly pleasures will appear too light and airy, too transitory and inconstant, to bear a comparison with those richer enjoyments to which the soul has access by faith.

(2.) As the gospel supplies the strongest motives to holiness, so faith brings the heart into contact with those motives.

(3.) So important is an increase of faith to an advancement in the divine life, that all the graces of the Christian are represented as so

* Heb. i. 3. † Rev. xiv 2; v. 12.

many fruits of faith, neither any further acceptable to God than as they spring from this principle. In their extent, perfection, and variety they are nothing more than the genuine practice of a lively faith: "Abide in me, and let my words abide in you."* Faith is a prolific grace; it produces and maintains every other; it "works by love;"† it purifies the heart.‡

II. In its aspect towards God. It is the grand instrument of glorifying him.

In its essential exercises, apart from its external effects, it is eminently adapted to glorify God. It renders to him the glory due unto his name. It rests on him as the Eternal Truth, as the Rock of Ages: "Abraham, being strong in faith, gave glory to God."§

*Directions for increasing Faith.*

I. Earnest and humble prayer: "Lord, increase our faith." Fall at the footstool of the Cross, crying, with him in the gospel, "Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief."‖

II. Frequent and devout converse with the object of it.

III. Watchfulness against the influence of those objects which have a fatal tendency to eclipse its light, to obstruct its operations, and impair its effects: namely, sensual pleasure, eager pursuit of the world intimate converse with men of the world.

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## XXIV.

## ON WISDOM.

JAMES i. 5.—*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.*¶

OF all the gifts which God is wont to dispense to the children of men, the most valuable is wisdom. Without this, the advantages we derive from every other are precarious and transitory, and are often more than overbalanced by the evils which result from their abuse. Wisdom is of incomparable value, as it instructs us how to use every other good; how to turn it to the best account, and make it most subservient to the true end of our being. The Scriptures extol the excellence of wisdom in the highest terms:—"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding: For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than pure gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her."**

Wisdom is to be distinguished from knowledge; to which it bears

* John xv. 7. † Gal. v. 6. ‡ 1 John iii. 3 § Rom. iv. 20.
‖ Mark ix. 24. ¶ Preached in June, 1811. ** Prov. iii. 13–15

an affinity, but ought not to be confounded with it. There may be a large compass of knowledge acquired, the fruit of extensive observation and reading, accompanied with a quick perception and a capacious memory, where there is very little wisdom. A wretched misconduct may appear at the same [time] a series of imprudences, thoughtless prodigality, or intemperance, sufficient to invalidate the least pretension to wisdom. They are far more knowing than wise men. Talents of the highest order, and such as are calculated to command universal admiration, may exist apart from wisdom. Though wisdom necessarily presupposes knowledge, and it is impossible to exercise it in things of which we are ignorant, yet it ought to be something more practical, or rather more comprehensive: it ever bears a relation to the end; and, in proportion as it is perfect, to the highest and last end the agent can be supposed to have in view. It first judges of the end fittest to be pursued, and next determines what are the most fitting and suitable means of accomplishing it.

Every other quality besides is subordinate and inferior to wisdom, in the same sense as the mason who lays the bricks and stones in a building is inferior to the architect who drew the plan and superintends the work. The former executes only what the latter contrives and directs. Now, it is the prerogative of wisdom to preside over every inferior principle, to regulate the exercise of every power, and limit the indulgence of every appetite, as shall best conduce to one great end. It being the province of wisdom to preside, it sits as umpire on every difficulty, and so gives the final direction and control to all the powers of our nature. Hence it is entitled to be considered as the top and summit of perfection. It belongs to wisdom to determine when to act and when to cease; when to reveal, and when to conceal a matter; when to speak, and when to keep silence; when to give, and when to receive; in short, to regulate the measure of all things, as well as to determine the end, and provide the means of obtaining the end, pursued in every deliberate course of action.

Every particular faculty or skill besides needs to derive direction from this; they are all quite incapable of directing themselves. The art of navigation, for instance, will teach us to steer a ship across the ocean, but it will never teach us on what occasions it is proper to take a voyage. The art of war will instruct us how to marshal an army, or to fight a battle, to the greatest advantage; but you must learn from a higher school when it is fitting, just, and proper to wage war or to make peace. The art of the husbandman is to sow and bring to maturity the precious fruits of the earth; it belongs to another skill to regulate their consumption by a regard to our health, fortune, and other circumstances.

In short, there is no faculty we can exert, no species of skill we can apply, but requires a superintending hand; but looks up, as it were, to some higher principle, as a maid to her mistress, for direction: and this universal superintendent is wisdom.*

* The admirers of Cowper will, on reading the above, be naturally reminded of his graphic contrast of Knowledge and Wisdom, in the sixth book of the Task:—

To carry our ideas of it as high as possible, the wise man traces it up to its fountain, and contemplates it as it subsists in the breast of Deity. "The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens. By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew."*

But though we have taken occasion to speak thus far of wisdom in general, it is doubtful whether we are to take the word in that extension in the passage before us. If we turn to the context, we shall find St. James describing the happy fruits which result from a right temper under affliction and persecution. This epistle, as well as the two epistles of Peter, are supposed to have been addressed to the Jews under circumstances of persecution. St. James had exhorted Christians to count it all joy when they fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of their faith worketh patience. "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." He then adds, "If any of you lack wisdom" (that is, the wisdom necessary to suffer right, the wisdom included in a right and becoming temper under persecutions and trials), "let him ask of God."

In this view, the wisdom here mentioned may be considered as including two things.

I. A knowledge of duty.

A clear and just conception of what was duty was not always easily attained. A season of persecution for righteousness' sake would naturally be productive, in many cases, of great difficulty in determining how to act. "When they persecute you in one city," said our Lord, "flee ye to another." But what is the degree of danger, what the [serious advance] of the approaching storm, that will exempt flight from the charge of pusillanimity? What the just limits between a temporizing policy and imprudent rashness? There is, doubtless, a just limit between wantonly exposing ourselves to danger, and a cowardly shrinking from it; between that selfish timidity which will sacrifice truth to safety, and that undistinguishing fearlessness which will prompt us "to cast pearls before swine," though it be morally certain "they will turn again and rend us."

A nice discernment of the true path of duty on such occasions can only be acquired by divine teaching.

II. The wisdom necessary in such circumstances includes especially a right temper of mind towards God and our fellow-creatures.

1. Towards God. This temper very much consists in an humble acquiescence in his dispensations, in a readiness to suffer under his

"Knowledge and Wisdom, far from being one,
Have oftimes no connexion. Knowledge dwells
In heads replete with thoughts of other men;
Wisdom in minds attentive to their own.
Knowledge, a rude unprofitable mass,
The mere materials with which Wisdom builds,
Till smooth'd, and squar'd, and fitted to its place,
Does but encumber whom it seems to enrich.
Knowledge is proud that he has learn'd so much;
Wisdom is humble that he knows no more."—Ed

* Prov. iii. 19 20

hand, and in his cause. It is one thing to suffer under the hand of God inevitable calamities, and another to suffer with a cheerful resignation, with a full and unreserved acquiescence in the Divine disposals, mixing adoring thoughts of the wisdom of his proceedings and the equity of his dispensations, saying, from the heart, with our blessed Lord, "Not my will, but thine be done;" "Father, glorify thy name." In this, and in every other instance, the conduct of our Lord furnishes us with a perfect example of that wisdom it is our duty to implore of God. The wisdom that bows the mind to submission "stays it upon God," and fills it with meekness and compassion, while we "commit ourselves to him as the faithful Creator," is of no ordinary kind—can be procured only from one quarter.

2. This includes a proper temper towards our fellow-creatures: and particularly towards the authors of our sufferings. Nature, left to itself, is apt to break out into resentment, to feel exasperated; and the more in proportion as the treatment we meet with is unquestionably unreasonable and unjust.

The first suggestion of nature in such circumstances is, "to render evil for evil," to wish to be revenged, and to retaliate the usage we have sustained. Very different is the wisdom that is from above: which teaches "if our enemy be hungry, to feed him; if thirsty, to give him drink; and thus to heap coals of fire upon his head: that, instead of being "overcome of evil, we may overcome evil with good."* To look upon men, however injurious, as instruments in the hand of a just and holy God, and to overlook the former in an attention to the latter, is a high attainment of spiritual wisdom; like David, who, when he was cursed and insulted by Shimei, said, "Let him alone, for the Lord hath bidden him; it may be that the Lord may requite me good for his cursing this day."†

While we feel the effects of their malice, to forgive it freely and sincerely, and to pray with sincerity that it may not be laid to their charge, not to permit the conduct of the enemy to induce a forgetfulness of what belongs to him as a creature of God, and a partaker of the same nature, is a piece of wisdom that is truly godlike. While we are assisted by divine grace to bear persecutions and afflictions in a right spirit, the gracious purpose of God in permitting them advances towards its completion; the process goes on without disturbance; the sanctifying tendency of it continues unchecked; patience has its perfect work; in order to our being "perfect and entire, lacking nothing." Repining and impatience tend eminently to frustrate the [merciful intentions of Providence in our affliction; while the composure of a well-regulated mind—of a mind stayed upon God, gives them an opportunity of working their full effect. And on this account a suitable temper in a season of persecution and trial may justly be denominated an important branch of wisdom. Though the apostle had, in enjoining the duty before us, an especial view to the case of persecution, yet this is by no means the only case to which the advice is applicable. The occasions in which we lack wisdom are very numerous: in each of them it will behoove us to ask it of God.

* Rom. xii. 20, 21. † 2 Sam. xvi. 11, 12.

We are continually liable to difficulties and sorrows, from which nothing but a superior skill to our own can extricate us: "The way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."* Are we at a loss in present circumstances to descry the path of duty and safety, when our way appears to be hedged in on every side; is darkness set in our paths, and we know not how to proceed?—"Let us ask wisdom of God." Do we feel ourselves habitually overpowered by the force of temptation; do we feel evil present with us, or are we in danger of being carried [along] by the [violence] of our sensual appetites, against which we have hitherto struggled in vain?—[Let us ask wisdom of God.]

Enforce the exhortation of seeking it of God in the following considerations:—

I. As it is of indispensable necessity, so it is in vain to seek it elsewhere.

II. It resides in him in its utmost perfection.

III. He is willing to communicate: "For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous."† "Giveth liberally," ἁπλῶς, with a liberal mind, bountifully.

The caution,—"nothing doubting."

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## XXV.

### ON ENGAGEDNESS OF HEART IN APPROACHING UNTO GOD.

JEREMIAH XXX. 21.—*For who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the Lord.*

IN this chapter is contained an illustrious prophecy of the restoration of the ancient Israelites to their own land: first, from their captivity in Babylon, whither a part of the nation were already, and the remainder were shortly to be removed; next, from their long captivity and dispersion through all the countries of the earth, which has now subsisted for near eighteen hundred years. As a standing record of the faithfulness of God to his promises, as well as his infallible foreknowledge of all events, the prophet is commanded to commit to writing all the words which God had spoken to him during the whole time he had exercised the prophetic office.

Those who had presumed to speak in the name of the Lord, without being commissioned, had flattered the people with the assurances that the residue of the people should not be carried into Babylon, and that the part of the nation which were already sent thither should speedily be restored to their native country. In opposition to these false sug-

* Jer. x. 23. † Prov. ii. 6, 7.

gestions, Jeremiah was commanded to send a message to the captives in Babylon, saying, "Build ye houses in Babylon, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons."* In that message he delivered the famous prediction respecting the precise time of the duration of their captivity, which he limits to seventy years, and the study of which enabled Daniel to perceive its approaching termination. "In the first year of his reign (*i. e.* of Darius), I Daniel understood by books the number of the years whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the destruction of Jerusalem."†

As a part of the distinguishing favours which God said he had in reserve for the people, he promises that at their restoration the oppression of a foreign yoke should be broken, and they should be again ruled by princes of their own race, agreeable to the language of Isaiah respecting the same event; when the people shall first be purified and reformed by divine chastisement, and afterward reinstated in a happy and prosperous condition. "And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: and I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness."‡ It is not only foretold that a native governor should be set over the house of Israel, but that he should be distinguished for his piety. "The Lord will cause him to draw nigh unto him."

The words of the text may be considered in three points of view.

I. As descriptive of the character of Zerubbabel, they were accomplished in the restoration of the Jews, after the seventy years' captivity, when a governor was appointed over them named Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the great grandson of Jehoiachim. He was a person eminently devoted to God, who exerted himself with much zeal in rebuilding the altar and the temple, and establishing the worship of God. Under his auspices the services of the sanctuary were renewed, after a cessation of seventy years. The feast of tabernacles was established in the seventh month. Masons and builders were hired from Sidon to assist in erecting the temple, the foundation of which was laid amid confused expressions of joy and lamentation: joy on the part of the young men at witnessing the house of God rising up from its ruins; and lamentation on the part of the old, who had beheld the superior glory of the former.§

When the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin, envying their prosperity, hired counsellors against them, and procured an order from the King of Persia to put a stop to the work, it was of necessity suspended for a while; but he lost no time in resuming it at the first opportunity, till it was completed in the sixth year of Darius Hystaspes. A feast of dedication was kept on this joyful occasion, and afterward the feast of the passover was celebrated on the fourteenth of the first month.

* Jer. xxix. 5, 6. † Dan. ix. 2. ‡ Isa. i. 25-27. § See Ezra iii. 11-13.

with great joy, as Ezra observes: "The Lord made them joyful, and turned the heart of the King of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel."*

He and Joshua the high-priest were represented in the visions of Zechariah as the two candlesticks supplied through pipes from olive-trees, to indicate the plenitude of that juice with which they were endued, which is thus explained by the angel:—"Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth."† The difficulties attending the work, which were very great in themselves, were extremely heightened by the malice and opposition of the enemies of God, particularly of the Samaritans; but the strength and fortitude with which he was endowed from on high enabled him to surmount them. "Who art thou, O great mountain?" said the prophet; "before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain. Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands also shall finish it; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you."‡

II. The words of the text admit of being applied, with the greatest propriety, to the Lord Jesus Christ. The prophecy contained in the thirtieth and thirty-first chapters looks forward to gospel times, and has an ultimate respect to the final restoration of the Jews, and their conversion to the Messiah, of whom Zerubbabel was an illustrious type. The prophet was wont, in connexion with the assurances of divine favour to the Israelites, in restoring their temple after the captivity, to mix predictions of the coming of the Messiah:—"Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."§

The prophet, foreseeing the coming of the Messiah, and descrying his character, spake with an air of surprise: "And who is he that has engaged his heart to approach unto God?" None ever approached unto God so nearly, or under the same character, as he did. He, considered as man, was taken into an intimate personal union with the Deity, so as to become Immanuel, or "God with us;"‖ and he approached to God, in the office of a Mediator, to make peace between the offended Majesty of Heaven and his sinful creatures. He came, like Aaron, with incense, between the living and the dead, to stay the plague, and arrest divine vengeance in its career. He approached unto God in our behalf, not with the trembling diffidence of a sinful mortal, who is conscious of his own danger and demerits, but with the holy, becoming boldness of a son to a father. He interposed with precious blood; and, on the ground of the stipulations which intervene between him and the Father, claims his church as his purchase, and asserts his authority to save them "with an everlasting salvation;" "Deliver him

* Ezra vi. 22. † Zech. iv. 14. ‡ Zech. iv. 7-9. § Zech. vi. 12, 13. ‖ Isaiah vii. 14.

from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom."* He made his approach to God by a vicarious sacrifice and spotless obedience, by enduring the awful penalty denounced on transgressors; and by magnifying the law made it honourable.

His heart was also ineffably engaged in this work. None ever exhibited such a concern for the divine honour, such a zeal for the divine interests, as was exemplified by our blessed Lord. "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire: in burnt-offering and sin-offering thou hadst no pleasure. Then I said, To do thy will, O God, I come; thy law is in my heart."†

Nor was he deterred by the greatest discouragements, nor dismayed by the greatest opposition, nor by the certain prospect of the most dismal sufferings, so as to desist from persevering in his undertaking till it was completed. He did not "fail, nor was discouraged, till he had set judgment in the earth."

Animated by the joy that was set before him, "he endured the cross, despising the shame."

If we look through all the scenes and passages of his life, we shall find him incessantly engaged in his Father's business, with an utter contempt of the world, and a perfect absorption of mind in the great and holy objects he came to accomplish. He never for a moment lost sight of the ends of his mission, nor ever suffered his attention to be diverted from them by the love of ease, the fascination of pleasure, or the terrors of death. His disciples, who were the daily witnesses of his actions, were compelled to apply to him a remarkable expression in the prophetic part of the Psalms—"The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."‡

III. We may consider the passage before us as highly expressive of the true manner in which the service of God must be undertaken, if we would render it acceptable to him, or useful to ourselves.

Among the heathen, it was usual to form a conjecture of the good or the ill success of application to their deities from the state in which the entrails of the victim were found; and nothing was considered as a more fatal omen than its wanting a heart. Their worship, we are well aware, was folly and delusion; but in this instance it may serve to illustrate the subject before us, which is, the absolute necessity of the heart being engaged in religion.

By the heart the Scriptures generally intend the innermost and the noblest powers of the mind, in opposition to external actions of the body. It denotes deliberate choice, understanding, and feeling, as distinguished from the semblance of devotion, consisting in a compliance with its visible forms and regulations. As the heart has usually (whether justly or not it is not necessary to inquire) been looked upon as the seat of feeling,—in like manner as the brain has been supposed to be the chief organ of thought,—it has been, by an easy metaphor, employed to denote that faculty of the soul by which we perceive what appears desirable, and cleave to what affords us satisfaction, and

* Job xxxiii. 24. † Psalm xl. 6-8. ‡ Psalm lxix. 9.

taste the delight which certain objects are adapted to afford. This is a most essential part of religion; here is its proper seat.

1. It implies a preparation of heart for religious duties. Ezra "prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it," to disengage his mind from vain imaginations, from worldly thoughts, from every thing, in short, foreign to the spirit of religion. By a diligent perusal of a portion of the word of God, we are prepared to approach him; by hearing him when he speaks to us, we are fitted to speak to him.

He who rushes into the presence of the Most High without solemn deliberation, without reflecting on the weighty and serious nature of such an undertaking, can with little propriety be said to have "engaged his heart."

2. It includes the exercise of suitable affections in the services of religion, the being susceptible of such sentiments and dispositions as are correspondent to the universal object of worship, as well as to the diversified circumstances in which [we are placed.] Love, reverence, and trust, a profound sense of our own meanness and pollution, belong universally to every approach to God. While these dispositions, in truly pious souls, will receive a colour and complexion from their peculiar condition,—according as it is a condition of joy or sorrow, of sensible consolation or of desertion, is depressed with a consciousness of guilt or exhilarated with a sense of pardon,—the soul sometimes, with little reflection on its own state, will be taken up with adoring views of the Divine glory, delightfully losing itself in the vivid contemplation of the great All in All. At other times it will be occupied with an affecting view of the conduct of God towards it in providence and grace. "We thought of thy loving-kindness in the midst of thy temple."* There are seasons again, when, under burdens of guilt and distress, it will be incessantly stirring itself up to take hold upon God. "Have mercy upon me, O Lord: my soul is bowed down within me; my wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness."†

In such circumstances the pious soul will resemble Jacob, who wrestled with the angel, wept, and made supplication. In all these various exercises the heart will be engaged, in approaching to God: the heart will be mingled with it, as the expression signifies.

3. It includes constancy and unshaken firmness, steadfastness of resolution to cleave to God. "I have sworn," says David, "and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments. I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always, even unto the end."

Contrast this with the conduct of the children of Israel at the Red Sea, and with Saul,

* Psalm xlviii. 9. † Psalm vi. 2; xxxviii. 5, 6

# XXVI.

## ON FAMILY WORSHIP.

CHRON. xvi. 43.—*And all the people departed, every man to his house: and David returned to bless his house.*

PUBLIC exercises of religion, when properly conducted, have a happy tendency to prepare the mind for those of a more private nature. When the soul is elevated and the heart softened by the feelings which public worship is calculated to inspire, we are prepared to address the throne of Grace with peculiar advantage; we are disposed to enter with a proper relish on such a duty, and thus "go from strength to strength." David, at the time to which this passage refers, had been assisting at a great and joyful solemnity, that of bringing the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom, where it had abode three months, to the place which he had prepared for it. The joy which David felt on this interesting occasion was very rapturous. He conducted it to Jerusalem, and set it in the midst of the tent he had pitched for it. He offered, as a testimony of his zeal and devotion, burnt-offerings and sacrifices to God, and then closed the solemnity.

We need be at no loss to ascertain the import of this expression. It undoubtedly signifies his imploring the blessing of God upon his people by prayer and supplication. Under the ancient law, God was pleased to appoint a form in which Aaron the high-priest was commanded to bless the people. "On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."*

This instructs us how to understand what is meant by "David's returning to bless his house;" it was to present them to God in prayer, and entreat his blessing upon them.

I shall take occasion from these words to urge upon you the duty of family prayer; a duty, I fear, too much neglected among us, though it is one of high importance and indispensable obligation. In bringing this subject before you, I shall, first, attempt to show the solid reasons on which it is founded; and, secondly, endeavour, with the blessing of God, to suggest a few hints respecting the best method of performing it.

1. The passage before us invites us to consider it as a practice by which good men have been distinguished in every age.

It pleads the sanction of the highest example. It was exemplified, we see, in the conduct of David, "the sweet psalmist of Israel," "the man after God's own heart;" a great victorious prince, who did not suppose the cares of royalty a sufficient reason for neglecting it. In the various removals of Abraham from place to place, we find that

*Num vi. 22-26.

wherever he came to sojourn he built an altar, to call upon the name of the Lord: an altar at which, there is the greatest reason to believe, he was wont to assemble his family, and to present his addresses on their, as well as his own, behalf. We know, from the testimony of Scripture, that he was eminently conspicuous for the care he took of the religious instruction of his household. This part of his character is attested in the following emphatic manner: "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that I may bring upon Abraham that which I have spoken of him."*

But wherein, we may safely ask, was this solicitude for the spiritual welfare of his household displayed, if he never bowed the knee before them in prayer; never exemplified before their eyes so important a duty as that of devout supplication to the Almighty?

In the history of Isaac we read of his building an altar at Beersheba, and calling upon the name of the Lord. Such also was the custom of Jacob at the different places where he fixed his habitation. On one of these occasions we find him thus addressing his household: "Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments; and let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went."†

Thus ancient is the practice on which we are now insisting. It appears to have formed a prominent part of the religion of patriarchal times, and it has subsisted in every period of the Christian church.

In later ages, who among the devoted servants of Christ can be mentioned who have neglected it? The pious reformers, the venerable founders of the Established Church of England, we know, conscientiously practised and earnestly enforced it; and so did our pious forefathers among the nonconformists. This was a branch of their conduct for which they incurred the ridicule of a careless and ungodly world; and in their days it was ever recognised as an inseparable appendage of true piety. They would have required no further proof of the absence of the fear of God in a family than the want of a domestic altar, at which its members might call on the name of the Lord.

2. Family prayer is a natural and necessary acknowledgment of the dependence of families upon God, and of the innumerable obligations they are under to his goodness. The union of mankind in families is ascribed to God, and is a distinguished [mark] of his loving-kindness. "He setteth the solitary in families."‡ "He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children."§ The ties of domestic society are of his forming: the birth and preservation of children are eminent instances of his favour and beneficence. It is surely incumbent on families, then, to acknowledge him in their domestic relation.

Every family is a separate community, placed under one head, and governed by laws independent of foreign control. This sort of society is the root and origin of every other; and as it is the most ancient, so

* Gen. xviii. 19. † Gen. xxxv. 2, 3. ‡ Psalm lxviii. 6. § Psalm cxiii. 9.

it is bound together by ties [the most] tender and sacred. Every other social bond in which men are united is loose and incidental, compared to that which unites the members of the same family.

On what, let me ask, does the obligation of social worship rest? Is not in the social nature by which man is distinguished? It is because we are destined to live in society, and are bound together by mutual wants and sympathies, that it becomes a duty to worship the Creator in a social manner. Man being essentially a social creature, his religion takes the form of his nature, and becomes social.

Supposing the justice of these observations to be admitted, they conclude with the greatest force in favour of the obligation of family worship. Does the duty of social worship result from man's being placed in society? Here is the closest and most intimate society. Is it right that mercies received in common shall be publicly acknowledged; that the interposition of Divine goodness we in common want should be implored in company with each other? Here is a perfect identity of wants and necessities; a closer conjunction of interests than can possibly subsist in any other situation. In an affectionate and well-ordered family, that quick sympathy is felt which pervades the members of the body: if one member suffer, all suffer with it; or if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

No earthly blessing can befall the head of a family in which its members do not share the benefit: no calamity can befall him without spreading sadness and distress through the household. Whatever is suffered, or whatever is enjoyed, extends its influence through the whole circle. Whoever, consequently, reflects on the true foundation of social worship must perceive that the arguments which evince its propriety apply to the worship of families with still greater cogency, in proportion as the ties of domestic union are more close and intimate than all others. It is hardly possible to conceive of two individuals who are actuated by a principle of true religion, passing years together under the same roof without uniting in their addresses to a throne of Grace. We feel a persuasion that two such individuals, though nowise related to each other, will be led to signalize their union by acts of social piety, and that as they must often "hold sweet counsel together," so they will frequently be disposed to pour out their united supplications to God.

How much more may this be expected to take place between those who are united in the close relation of husbands and wives, parents and children! It most assuredly will, unless that ingredient in the character be wanting which in the former instance was supposed,—a principle of real piety. Thus we perceive that family religion is the natural result of the social nature of man, when sanctified by Divine grace; that it is, in truth, a most important branch of social religion. Viewed in that light, it is clearly comprehended within the extent of the injunction, of "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance."*

3. The duty we are recommending is enforced by its tendency

* Eph. vi. 18.

under the blessing of God, to form the minds of children and servants to the love and practice of religion. On those persons, if there be any such present, who look upon religion to be a delusive fancy, instead of the most important concern in the world, we despair of making any impression in this discourse: but with those who believe it to be the one thing needful, the consideration now mentioned will have considerable weight.

Nothing is more certain than that whatever we wish others to practise, we must exemplify in our conduct as well as enjoin. The truth of this observation extends to every branch of conduct without exception. Would we wish to impress on young persons a sound regard to veracity? we must maintain a strict regard to it in our own intercourse with mankind. Are we desirous to train up our families in the observation of the rules of justice? we must take care to signalize our attachment to it by exemplary uprightness in our own behaviour. In every department of moral and religious conduct, we must not only point out the path, but lead the way. The application of this remark to the subject in hand is extremely obvious. Your wish, we take it for granted, is to train up your children in the fear of the Lord, and, as a necessary [branch] of this, in the practice of prayer. Is it likely you will succeed in that wish while you neglect to afford them an example of what you wish them to practise? What, under the blessing of Divine grace, is so calculated to impress them with a conviction of the importance of prayer, as the being called at stated intervals to take part in your devout supplications to God? While they witness your constancy, assiduity, and fervour in this exercise, they cannot fail of acknowledging its importance, without avowing a contempt of parental example.

A household in which family prayer is devoutly attended to, conjoined with the reading of the Scriptures, is a school of religious instruction. The whole contents of the sacred volume are in due course laid open before them. They are continually reminded of their relation to God and the Redeemer, of their sins and their wants, and of the method they must take to procure pardon for the one and the relief of the other. Every day they are receiving "line upon line, and precept upon precept." A fresh accession is continually making to their stock of knowledge; new truths are gradually opened to their view, and the impressions of old truths revived. A judicious parent will naturally notice the most striking incidents in his family in his devotional addresses; such as the sickness, or death, or removal for a longer or shorter time, of the members of which it is composed. His addresses will be varied according to circumstances. Has a pleasing event spread joy and cheerfulness through the household? it will be noticed with becoming expressions of fervent gratitude. Has some calamity overwhelmed the domestic circle? it will give occasion to an acknowledgment of the Divine equity; the justice of God's proceedings will be vindicated, and grace implored through the blood of the Redeemer to sustain and sanctify the stroke.

When the most powerful feelings and the most interesting circum

stances are thus connected with religion, it is not unreasonable to hope that, through Divine grace, some lasting and useful impressions will be made. Is not some part of the good seed thus sown, and thus nurtured, likely to take root and to become fruitful? Deeply as we are convinced of the deplorable corruption of the human heart, and the necessity, consequent on this, of divine agency to accomplish a saving purpose, we must not forget that God is accustomed to work by means; and surely none can be conceived more likely to meet the end. What can be so likely to impress a child with a dread of sin, as to hear his parent constantly deprecating the wrath of God as justly due to it; or to induce him to seek an interest in the mediation and intercession of the Saviour, as to hear him imploring it for him, day by day, with an importunity proportioned to the magnitude of the subject? By a daily attention on such exercises, children and servants are taught most effectually how to pray: suitable topics are suggested to their minds; suitable petitions are put into their mouths; while their growing acquaintance with the Scriptures furnishes the arguments by which they may "plead with God."

May I not appeal to you who have enjoyed the blessing of being trained up under religious parents, whether you do not often recall with solemn tenderness what you felt in domestic worship; how amiable your parent appeared interceding for you with God? His character appeared at such seasons doubly sacred, while you beheld in him, not only the father, but the priest over his household; invested, not only with parental authority, but with the beauty of holiness.

Where a principle of religion is not yet planted in the hearts of the young, family prayer, accompanied with the reading of the Scriptures, is, with the Divine blessing, the most likely means of introducing it. Where it already subsists, it is admirably adapted to cherish, strengthen, and advance it to maturity: in the latter case it is like the morning and the evening dew at the root of the tender blade.

On the contrary, when there is no public acknowledgment of God in a family, nothing can be expected but that children and servants should grow up ignorant and careless of their highest concerns. You may pretend, indeed, that you are punctual in your private devotions; but without observing that this pretence, under such circumstances, will seldom bear a rigorous examination. What is that part of your conduct that falls under the notice of your domestics, that distinguishes you from those unhappy persons who live without God in the world? If the Scriptures are not read, if your family is never convened for worship, no trace or vestige of religion remains. A stranger who sojourns in such a family will be tempted to exclaim, with much more truth and propriety than Abraham on another occasion, "Surely the fear of God is not in this place."

4. The practice of family worship may be expected to have a most beneficial influence on the character and conduct of the heads of families themselves. In common with other means of grace, it is reasonable to expect it will have this influence. Of all the means of

grace, prayer is the most beneficial. But prayer, under the circumstances we are now contemplating, is likely to be productive of advantages which deserve to be considered by themselves.

He who statedly invites others to be witnesses of his devotions invites a peculiar inspection of his behaviour, and must be conscious to how much observation and contempt he lays himself open, should he betray a flagrant inconsistency between his prayers and his conduct. That parent who morning and evening summons his family to acts of devotion is not perhaps distinctly aware of the total amount of the influence this circumstance has upon his mind. It will act as a continual monitor, and will impose useful restraint upon his behaviour. He recollects that he is about to assume an awful and venerable character in the eyes of his domestics—a character which must set the indulgence of a multitude of improprieties in a most glaring light. Is he in danger of being ensnared into indecent levity, or of contracting a habit of foolish jesting and talking? he recollects he is soon to appear as the mouth of his family in addressing the blessed God. Is he surrounded with temptations to an immoderate indulgence of his fleshly appetites in meats and drinks; should he yield to the temptation, how would he bear in the eyes of his family to appear on his knees before God? Is he tempted to use harsh and provoking language to his children? he recollects he is in a few hours to bear them in his arms before the Lord. He is to commend his companion in life to the Divine mercy and protection; how then can he be "bitter against her?" The case of his servants is to be shortly presented before God in social prayer: under such a recollection, it will surely not be difficult for him to forbear threatening, reflecting that he himself has a Master in heaven. Knowing that in the hearing of all his inmates he is about to bewail the corruptions of his nature, to implore pardon for his sins and strength to resist temptation; will he not feel a double obligation on this account to struggle against that corruption, and anxiously to shun temptation? The punctual discharge of the duty we are contending for will naturally strengthen his sense of the obligation of domestic duties, forcibly remind him of what he owes to every member of the domestic circle, and cement the ties of conjugal and parental affection.

5. I proceed to notice a few of the probable pleas which will be urged for the neglect of this duty.

(1.) The most plausible I can think of is want of ability. To this it would not be easy to furnish a reply, did it absolutely require a degree of ability above the most ordinary measure. They who urge this plea may be conscious of their incapacity to become the mouth of others in extemporary prayer, but this is by no means necessary. Excellent forms, expressive of the wants and desires of all Christian families, may be obtained, which, supposing the inability alleged to be real, ought by all means to be employed. We, as dissenters, for the most part use and prefer free prayer. But God forbid we should ever imagine this the only mode of prayer which is acceptable to God. We cannot doubt that multitudes of devout persons have used forms of devotion with great and eminent advantage. To present our desires

before God, in reliance on the atonement of the Mediator, is the real end of prayer, [and] is equally acceptable whether it be offered with or without a preconceived form of words.

The plea of mental inability will not stand the test of an examination, unless it include an incapacity to read; a case comparatively rare, and which we hope is continually becoming rarer, and applies to few instances of the neglect we are complaining of.

It is more than probable that those who complain of this inability have never made the trial, and consequently never can form any accurate judgment of their qualifications. Were you to make the attempt, beginning with the use of a form if absolutely necessary, and making variations and additions as your feelings may suggest, you would find the accomplishment of that gracious promise, "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength."

If your omission of family prayer is accompanied with a similar neglect of private devotion, your situation is indeed deplorable; you are living "without God in the world." But supposing you to make conscience of private prayer, why not adopt the same method in domestic worship, with the addition of such petitions as the circumstance of its greater publicity may require? Beware lest a secret disaffection to God, a secret enmity to his person and his ways, lies at the foundation of this apology. It wears a show of humility, but it is but a mere shadow of it without the substance.

(2.) Another class of persons are ready to admit the propriety and utility of this practice, but allege that such is the variety and multitude of their worldly avocations, that they cannot spare the time requisite for this exercise. Let such be urged to remember that the time necessary for the purpose we are recommending is very small—five minutes will suffice for reading an ordinary chapter; [not many more for the utterance of a fervent] prayer; so that the exercise, morning and evening, need occupy little, if any thing, more than half an hour. And is this a space too much to be allotted, in the most busy life, for an exercise so sacred in its obligation, and so replete with advantage as this has been shown to be? Where is the man so incessantly occupied as not to allow himself more leisure than this, frequently, if not habitually—that does not allot more time to objects of confessedly inferior magnitude?

In addition to what has been advanced, it would not be difficult to prove that no loss of time will usually result; for what may seem a loss will be more than compensated by that spirit of order and regularity which the stated observance of this duty tends to produce. It will serve as an edge and border to preserve the web of life from unravelling: it will tend to keep every thing in its proper place and [time]; and this practice will naturally introduce a similar regularity into other employments.

Consider for a moment on what principle does the plea of want of time depend. Plainly on this: that religion is not the grand concern, that there is something more important than the service of God; that the pleasing and glorifying of our Maker is not the great end of human

existence;—a fatal delusion, a soul-destroying mistake, which militates against the whole spirit of the gospel, and presumptuously impeaches the wisdom of that Saviour who exclaimed, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."*

(3.) Another class will perhaps reply, "We are convinced of the urgent obligation of the duty which has been recommended; but we have so long neglected it that we know not how to begin,—are ashamed at the prospect of the surprise, the curiosity it will occasion."

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But there is much impiety in this shame; and if it be permitted to deter you from complying with the dictates of conscience and the commands of God, it will unquestionably class you with the fearful and unbelieving, who shall have their portion in the second death. To be ashamed of the service of Christ is to be ashamed of Christ and his cross; and you have heard the Divine denunciation of judgment on such characters: "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."† You are afraid of presenting yourself under a singular aspect to your domestics and acquaintance: have you not reflected on the awful and trying situation in which you will be placed by the infliction of the sentence, justly merited, "Of him will I be ashamed;" "Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee?"

II. Hints on the practice. Best mode of performing it.

1. Let it ever be joined with reading the Scriptures.
2. Let it be constant.
3. Attend with a full decision of mind, with the utmost seriousness.
4. Seek the aid of the Spirit.

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## XXVII.

### REFLECTIONS ON THE INEVITABLE LOT OF HUMAN LIFE

ECCLES. xi. 8.—*If a man live many years, and rejoice in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many.*

THERE is nothing better established by universal observation, than that the condition of man upon earth is, less or more, an afflicted condition: "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward."‡ As the sparks ascend by an immutable law in nature, so the sorrows to which we are exposed spring from necessity, from causes whose operation is unavoidable and universal. Look through all the genera-

* Matt. vi. 33. † Mark viii. 38 ‡ Job v. 7.

tions of man, throughout all times and places, and see if you can discover a single individual who has not, at one period or another, been exposed to the arrows of adversity. The roll or record of human destiny is written "within and without, with lamentation, and mourning, and wo."*

We are naturally extremely and immoderately attached to worldly enjoyments and to temporal prospects. Our souls cleave to them with an eagerness extremely disproportioned to their real value, which is one of the maledictions incurred by the fall. The curse denounced upon the earth for man's sake has contracted the sum of earthly good within a narrow compass, and blasted it with much vanity, but has not had the effect of dispelling the charm by which it engages our affections. It is a part of the misery of man, in his fallen state, that he has become more attached than ever to the world, now that it has lost its value. Having swerved from God, and lost his true centre, he has fallen into an idolatry of the world, and makes it the exclusive object of his attachment, even at the very time that its beauty is marred and its satisfactions impaired.

"It is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun."† While the sun of earthly prospects shines we are apt to feel the day of evil at a distance from our minds,—we are reluctant to admit the possibility of a change of scene,—we shut out the thought of calamity and distress, as an unwelcome intruder.

The young revel in the enjoyment of health, and exult in the gay hopes and enchanting gratifications suited to that delightful [season], as though they were never to know a period. Amused and transported with [their] situation and [their] prospects, it is with extreme difficulty they admit the conviction that the days are fast approaching when they shall confess they have no pleasure in them. "Let us enjoy the good things that are present." "Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments, and let no flower of the spring pass by us." "Let us crown ourselves with rose-buds before they be withered."‡

Experience, in most cases, soon alters their sentiments, and events arise which impress an indelible conviction of the short duration of earthly good. The bloom of health is blasted by disease; the seeds of some incurable malady begin to shoot up and make their appearance; or the agony of disappointed passions is impressed; or cares and anxieties begin to corrode the mind; or the hand of death [inflicts] some fatal stroke by which the object of the tenderest affection is snatched away.

If a long course of prosperity has been enjoyed, during which almost every thing has succeeded to the wish (which sometimes, though very rarely, occurs), the confidence in worldly hopes and prospects is mightily increased; the mind is more softened and enervated by an uninterrupted series of prosperity, and is the more unfitted to [go through] those scenes of distress which inevitably await him. He who is in this situation is tempted to say, "I shall surely die in my nest;"§ or, in the language of the rich man in the gospel, "Soul, eat, drink, and be merry,—thou hast goods laid up for many years."‖

* Ezek. ii. 10. † Eccles. xi. 7 ‡ Wisdom of Solomon ii. 8 § Job xxix. 18. ‖ Luke xii. 19.

The whole system of worldly amusement is adapted to make us forget the real condition of human life, to disguise every object, and to invest the present state with a sort of theatrical glow. It is contrived, in every part of it, to banish reflection, to hide the future from the view, and to make us overlook the evils of life, and the realities of eternity. But still, as the nature of things remains the same, as the course of human events can no more be arrested than the tide, the only effect of this voluntary infatuation is, to render the stroke of calamity, when it does fall, doubly heavy, by leaving the soul without preparation and without resources. "Their fear cometh as desolation, and their destruction as a whirlwind."* The lot of mankind is, sooner or later, a state of suffering, from which no past successes, no seeming stability in our station, can possibly secure. "Though a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity."†

It is wisdom, then, to form a just estimate of human life; to correct the illusions of our passions; and to regulate our expectations respecting the good and evil of the present, by the result of universal observation and experience. It is Solomon, that model of a great and prosperous prince, whose [mental] attainments, exalted station, and extraordinary prosperity combined to confer upon him, as far as possible, an exemption from suffering, who, under the dictate of the Holy Spirit, penned these words, "If a man live many years, and rejoice in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many."

Let us proceed briefly to consider what improvement should be made of this view of human life, of this universal exposure to affliction.

I. The first lesson it should teach us is, that we are not in the situation in which man was first formed. The original destination of man was not a state of suffering. When God first formed the world, on surveying all that he had created, he pronounced it to be "very good."‡ If it now be very evil, there must be a change in the state and condition of *mankind*, since the Supreme Being is immutable. It would be utterly repugnant to his perfections to doom an innocent creature to so much suffering; and the Word of God expressly declares "he does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men."§ Hence calamities are styled chastisements throughout the Scriptures, and are invariably spoken of as expressions of the Divine anger. Under the administration of a wise and holy Being, had there been no sin, there would have been no suffering. Tyrants may delight in displaying their power over their vassals, by inflicting upon them unmerited punishments; but far be it from us to suspect such conduct in "the Holy One of Israel,"‖ in Him who "delighteth in mercy."¶

The unspeakable calamities to which we are exposed, in our passage through life, announce our fallen state; nor is it possible to give any consistent account of them, without referring them, as the word of God uniformly does, to our original defection and departure from

* Prov. i. 27. † Eccles. xl. 8. ‡ Gen. i. 31.
§ Lam. iii. 33 ‖ Ezek. xxxix. 7. ¶ Mic. vii. 18.

God. In this light his conduct in inflicting them appears unexceptionably just and proper. We "have forsaken the fountain of living water,"* and it is just that the "cisterns" to which we repair should be "broken." We have served and loved "the creature more than the Creator;"† and it is just that created comforts should be imbittered. We have virtually declared, by our conduct, that there is no happiness to be found in God: how fitting is it that he should declare, "You shall find it nowhere else;" how equitable is it that he who leans upon an "arm of flesh,"‡ instead of trusting in the living God, should often [find] it to be a broken reed, which wounds him who stays himself upon it, instead of affording him support! When we consider what a scene of indescribable distress the state of the world presents at this moment;—the devastation of [nations]; the sudden reverses of fortune in the highest ranks; and the penury, embarrassment, and distress in the lower;—who does not see [in these] the tokens of the [Divine] displeasure; who can fail to perceive the marks of a fallen state, and that the Lord has a controversy, by which he pleads with all flesh?

We have all been guilty of spiritual idolatry, and the Lord in his justice spreads our carcasses before the objects of our guilty attachment. "At that time, saith the Lord, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves: and they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the hosts of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped."§ Let us no longer regard the calamities of life as the offspring of chance, or the product of blind necessity, but, agreeably to the oracles of God, as the judgments of the Lord.

II. Let the consideration of the universal exposure of man to calamities and sufferings prevent our being surprised or astonished when it becomes our own lot. When we are unexpectedly led into scenes of trial, we are apt to be filled with emotion, "as though some strange thing had happened unto us;"‖ and perhaps we are tempted to suspect that we are treated with an unjustifiable rigour. We are ready too often to draw invidious comparisons between ourselves and those who, we suppose, are dealt with in a more favourable manner; and secretly to say, Why am I thus afflicted and distressed; why am I set as a mark for his arrows? It might be sufficient, in order to repress such emotions, to remember that the Lord is a sovereign, who gives no account of his matters: shall the thing formed say to him that formed him, "Why hast thou made me thus?" "Who art thou that repliest against God?"¶ "Shall a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?"** We must be strangely acquainted with ourselves, if we are not aware that he has not corrected us less than our iniquities deserve. These considerations, however, though not slight, are not the only ones which are fitted to calm the tumult of the breast. We may, with advantage to ourselves, and unitedly with the most per-

* Jer. ii. 13. † Rom. i. 25. ‡ Jer. xvi. 5. § Jer. viii. 1, 2
‖ 1 Pet. iv. 12. ¶ Rom. ix. 20. ** Lam. iii. 39.

fect benevolence, cast our eyes abroad, to contemplate the universality of distress. We are not the only or the greatest sufferers: we have innumerable companions in tribulation. Without giving scope to imagination, or quitting the realities of life, we may easily find among our fellow-creatures instances of deeper wo, and more complicated distresses, than those which we feel. Here we may see a person, like Job, flourishing in affluence, and reduced, by a sudden and unexpected stroke, to the depth of penury. There we may behold another, like the same illustrious sufferer, deprived in a very short season of all his offspring by death. There we see the widowed mother of a numerous family at a loss to still the cries of her children, who are clamorous for bread. If we turn in another quarter, we may find a poor unhappy creature wasting away under an incurable and painful disorder, where the only vigorous principle seems to be the living cancer which corrodes him. Hear the bitter lamentation of Job: "Even to-day is my complaint bitter, and my stroke heavier than my groaning."* "When I lie down I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? I am full of tossings to and fro."† "Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together!" "therefore my words are swallowed up." "For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit."‡ Hear the man after God's own heart exclaim, "I water my couch with my tears,§ and mingle my drink with weeping."‖ "By reason of grief my flesh is dried up, and my heart is withered as grass."¶ Look at the history, not of the enemies only, but of the most eminent servants of God, and you will generally find their trials as conspicuous as their piety: so true is it that the high road to heaven is through suffering; and that "through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom."**

If we are tempted to repine at seeing others in peace and prosperity, while we are harassed and distressed, we form a most inadequate and premature judgment. Their period of trial will arrive; their day of calamity is also approaching; the mildew that blights their enjoyments is prepared; and from the evil omen of adversity it will be impossible for them to escape, more than ourselves. "If a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many."

III. Here we learn the propriety of not looking for happiness on earth. "This is not our rest: it is polluted."†† A state exposed to so much calamity can never have been designed as the scene of enjoyment; it must have been calculated for the purpose of trial. It is not Canaan; it is the wilderness through which the chosen tribes were destined to pass in their way to it; it is a vale of tears, [along] which the Christian pilgrim toils and struggles in his passage to the heavenly kingdom. Let us understand the real nature of our present condition; let us learn that nothing belonging to it is merely or principally intended for our gratification; that it is well suited to be the abode of a sinful creature upon trial, under a dispensation of mercy; where there

* Job xxiii. 2 † Job vii. 4. ‡ Job vi. 2, 3, 4 § Psalm vi. 6.
‖ Psalm cii. 9. ¶ Psalm cii. 4. ** Acts xiv. 22. †† Micah ii. 10.

is just enough of good to support under evil, and those prospects of greater good afforded in a future state which are sufficient to dispel despondency. It is a condition characterized by vicissitude, by danger, by suffering, and by hope; and he is to be esteemed the happiest man who most surmounts its tempests, escapes its pollutions, and is sanctified by its trials. Are you at present in circumstances of ease and comfort? be thankful for it, but place no reliance on its continuance. Enjoy with moderation whatever is gratifying in your lot, but let it not engage your heart, let it not deeply entangle your affection. By an intimate converse with the promises of the gospel, learn to live above [the world], and consider it not as [constituting] your portion or your happiness. Study, indeed, to the utmost to be dead to the world, and alive to God; that "when he who is our life shall appear, ye also shall appear with him in glory."*

IV. Let us all be engaged to lay in a suitable preparation for the days of adversity. Let us be aiming to acquire, by faith and prayer, and the diligent perusal of the Scriptures, those principles which will effectually support us in the dark and cloudy day.

The Christian character is [formed] of such dispositions as are, each of them apart, and still more when combined, adapted to support the soul amid the severest trials. Under the influence of these, the Christian believer fears none of those things that may happen. Faith, by elevating the attention to a future world—to the glory to be revealed, by imparting to the real Christian a living sense of that atonement which is given in the gospel, is a principle of primary efficacy. The habitual disposition to look upon this present state as a passage and a pilgrimage, which is deeply wrought into the Christian character, is of itself an admirable preparation for suffering. The solemn renunciation of the world included in this [impression] of the [mind] tends immediately to the same effect. Thus the joys of faith, the consolations of the Holy Ghost, raise the soul to a surprising elevation above the storms and trials of life.

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## XXVIII.

### ON CHASTISEMENT RESULTING IN PENITENCE

JER. xxxi. 18.—*Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God.*

THIS chapter contains great and gracious promises made to the people of Israel upon the prospect of their true repentance. They are assured, that notwithstanding the severe rebukes of Providence, the

* Col. iii. 4.

Lord had mercy in reserve when their afflictions had answered the purpose for which they were appointed, in humbling and reforming them.

Before God visits his people with consolation he prepares them for it by inspiring a penitential spirit, well knowing that to indulge them with his smiles while they continue obstinate and unreclaimed would neither comport with his character nor contribute to their good. His benignity and condescension are sufficiently evinced in his "waiting to be gracious;" in the promptitude with which he pardons the humble penitent. He shows himself attentive to the first movement of the contrite heart, agreeable to his declaration in the passage before us, "I have surely heard Ephraim." In these words we have the picture of the inmost feelings of an humble and penitent heart. We behold it in the deepest retirement, without the least disguise, pouring itself out before God.

In these remarkable words we have an acknowledgment and a prayer.

I. These words contain an acknowledgment—"Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke."

1. This expression we conceive to denote the inefficacy of former corrections. In the Septuagint it is rendered, "As a bullock, I was not taught: thou didst chastise me, and I was chastised." This was all; and no other effect ensued than the uneasy pain which chastisement necessarily imparts. Ephraim is represented as conscious that former corrections had answered little purpose. He laments the little improvement he had made, and prays for such an interposition of Divine power and grace as may work an efficient conversion: "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned." The rebukes of Providence are often represented in the Scriptures in this light.—"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."*

Since afflictive dispensations "spring not from the dust," but are ordained of God, who takes no pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures, nor "willingly afflicts the children of men;"†—since a state of innocence would have included an exemption from every sorrow on the one hand, and the sufferings of life are not for the most part destructive —there is no light in which it is so natural to consider them as chastisements; which are effects of displeasure, but not of a displeasure intended for the destruction of its object, but the amendment.

2. Though corrections are calculated to produce amendment, though such is their tendency and design, it is evident, from observation and experience, they often fail in accomplishing the effect. It is not uncommon to see men hardened under rebukes, and to grow more bold and presumptuous in the commission of sin, after having experienced severer trials than before. This melancholy fact is of no recent observation; it is frequently described and lamented in the word of God.

* Heb. xii. 5, 6. † Lam. iii. 33.

"Thou hast stricken them," says Jeremiah, "but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return."*

Of the inefficacy of mere external correction we have striking proof in the conduct of the generations who were conducted from Egypt under the hand of Moses. Never were a people more frequently or more severely corrected, and never did a people [show] themselves more incorrigible. While the remembrance of their sufferings was fresh they seemed disposed in earnest to seek God; but no sooner did the sense of their calamities wear off, than they relapsed into all their former disobedience and rebellion. "When he slew them then they sought him: and they returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the most high God their redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongue."† This is but a picture of what we may observe every day. We see men under afflictive dispensations evince a degree of emotion: they appear in some measure humbled and convinced; and with much apparent sincerity confess their persuasion of the vanity of the world, and of the utter impossibility of finding happiness out of the ways of religion. If they are brought to the brink of the grave, and eternity presents itself to their immediate prospect, we find them making the most solemn resolutions, condemning their former course of life, and resolving, if spared, to enter on a new course. The frivolous objects which before engaged their attention seem to have lost their charm, and a flattering prospect is exhibited of their turning into the path of wisdom. From their subsequent conduct, however, it is manifest their passions were only laid asleep, while their principles continued unchanged. The influence of the world was suspended, not destroyed. The novelty of their situation put new thoughts into their minds, and awakened fears to which before they had been strangers. But as the whole impression was to be ascribed to circumstances, when these circumstances were changed the mind returned to its former state. Their "goodness was as the morning cloud, and as the early dew which passeth away." The serious impressions they felt during the season of affliction were never followed up. They terminated in no regular attachment to the serious exercises of piety; or if they were led to pray at all, they were not sufficiently deep and abiding to produce a perseverance in that duty. The recovery of health or the return of prosperity gradually, but speedily, effaced every trace of serious feeling, and left them perhaps in a state of deeper alienation from God than ever.

3. Ephraim is here represented as reflecting upon it. (Proximate causes of the inefficacy of correction by itself.)

4 Inattention to the hand of God, and as a natural consequence their neglecting to pass from the contemplation of their sufferings to their sins. Religion begins with consideration. Till they are brought to thorough reflection, no real improvement can be expected. It was a

* Jer. v. 3. † Ps. lxxviii. 34-36.

frequent complaint with the Messiah, "My people will not consider." "The Lord crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it."* If we consider affliction as springing from the dust, and content ourselves as looking on[1] at [illegible]ondary causes, or human instruments, no wonder *

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Men are apt to spare themselves; to give way to a dangerous pusillanimity, by shrinking from reflections which, however useful in their tendency, they find to be painful. They are apt to consider their sufferings as expiatory.

5. In the serious purpose of a religious life, formed under afflictive dispensations, too many depend entirely upon resolutions formed in their own strength. To such purposes may be applied the beautiful image of Nahum: "As the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known."†

II. The prayer,—"Turn thou me," [may be] enforced by such arguments as these:—

1. The plea of necessity. There is no other resource. It is evident something is wanting, some Divine [agency], which shall produce the effect which external events have failed to [produce].

2. To entreat God to turn is not to ask an impossibility. The residue of the Spirit is with him.

3. It is worthy of his interposition. The turning the heart is a fit occasion on which Omnipotence may act.

4. The plea may be enforced by precedents. It implies no departure from his known methods.

5. We may enforce it by a reference to the divine [mercy].

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## XXIX.

### ON THE COMFORTS OF CHRISTIANS UNDER EITHER WORLDLY OR SPIRITUAL TRIALS.

PSALM xciv. 19.—*In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul.*‡

LET us take a brief survey of the internal thoughts of a distressing nature which are apt to arise in the mind of a good man; and next observe the tendency of the comforts of the gospel to assuage or remove the uneasiness which they have occasioned.

I. Let us take a survey of some of the distressing thoughts which are apt to oppress the mind of a good man. They may be considered

* Micah vi. 9. † Nahum iii. 17.

‡ Preached at Leicester, December, 1815.

as relating to these objects: the state of the world, the state of the church, and his own state as an individual.

1. The state of the world. When a good man surveys the general prevalence of irreligion and impiety, when he considers how few there are comparatively who seek after God, or are moved by any impression of a serious nature, he cannot but be affected. "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved. Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law."* When, again, he considers whither such a course must tend, and in what it will issue, the prospect is still more alarming. It is no want of charity to suspect that the greater part of mankind fall short of the condition of salvation, it is the very consequence of submission to the authority of revelation. "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat."†

2. The state of the church. The palpable inconsistency between the lives of numerous professors of religion and the real import of that profession. The many instances of gross immorality which are found in the Christian church, [supply] the subject of much distressing reflection to the sincere follower of Christ. It was to St. Paul: "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." The injury sustained by the Divine honour, the discredit reflected on the gospel from this quarter, surpasses calculation.

The obstructions permitted to present themselves to the propagation of divine truth are of a sinister tendency, and give birth to many a painful reflection in the minds of such as have the interest of Zion at heart. In how many instances is the introduction of saving light prevented by the exercise of intolerance, while the most detestable corruption and idolatry are sanctioned and upheld by the same means? In how many instances have the fairest prospects of good been suddenly blasted by superior power, the faint embers of the true religion almost extinguished, and its possessors exposed to all the severities of persecution?

Such is the state of the Protestants in France at this moment.‡ From an authentic statement lately sent me, it appears that they are treated with the utmost cruelty, compelled to quit their habitations, hunted and driven like wild beasts; infants are torn from their mothers in order to be initiated into the mysteries of antichrist; and in some instances, whole families are massacred. Who can fail to be affected? So contrary to recent expectation, so offensively repugnant to the design of Providence and the dictates of prophecy, who can fail to exclaim with the pious Joshua—"What wilt thou do unto thy great name?" "Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge, who eat up my people as they eat bread?"§

3. Uneasy thoughts arising from his state as an individual. "Every heart knows his own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not therewith."

* Psalm cxix. 158, 53.
† Matt. vii. 13.
‡ See Note p. 145.
§ Psalm liii. 4.

Here we may briefly [advert to] trials of a worldly and trials of a spiritual nature.

(1.) Under the first of these, religion neither demands nor boasts a perfect insensibility. The inspired psalmist displayed a great vicissitude of feeling, arising from this quarter; he mourned under the calumny and oppression of his enemies, and gave utterance to cries and tears under his affliction. He felt with agonized poignancy the insults he met with on account of his pious confidence in God: "As with a sword in my bones, while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?"* The personal and domestic sufferings of Job are familiar to your recollection, and are penned [that they may] be monuments, to all ages, of the severity with which God sanctifies and tries his people, and of the happy and infallible issue.

(2.) Uneasy thoughts arise on a spiritual account. With a good man, his spiritual [welfare] is always an object of his first solicitude; so that when he contemplates the holiness and purity of God, he cannot but have, at times, many a serious inquiry how he shall appear before him. When he surveys his own pollution and guilt, the thought of appearing before God is one upon which he can scarcely dwell without secret trembling: "What if I shall be weighed in the balance and found wanting?" When we consider our low attainments in religion compared with our opportunities, our latent corruption, and our frequent miscarriages and failures, we are often tempted to call in question the reality of our religion, and to fear that, after all, we are only "almost Christians." If I am truly regenerate, and a child of God, why am I thus? Why such a mixture of earthly and sensual affections? Whence such coldness and deadness in religious exercises? Why so little delight in the Scriptures,—so little complacency? "My soul cleaveth unto the dust."†

(3.) Under desertion, under the hidings of God's countenance, how many painful thoughts arise! how ready to indulge despondency, and to fear he will never be merciful any more!

(4.) In the prospect before him; in the contemplation of the dangers and temptations which still await him; while he feels in himself nothing but frailty and weakness, how apt is he to apprehend some fatal overthrow! It seems almost too much for him to expect to be more than conqueror; that he shall be able to make his way through such a host of enemies, and pass into the celestial city. He seems to feel himself totally devoid of that spiritual strength and vigour which are requisite for such combats, which are necessary to enable him to vanquish such difficulties. He is ready to cry, "I shall never see that goodly mountain and Lebanon; I shall never see the king in his beauty, nor behold that land which is so far off."

II. Let us briefly notice the consolations of God opposed to these uneasy thoughts.

1. We first adverted to such as arise from the disordered state of the world.

* Psalm xlii 10. † Psalm cxix. 25.

On this subject great consolation springs from the conviction that the Lord reigneth. There sit at the helm infinite power, wisdom, and goodness. These perfections are of such a nature that renders it impossible for them to lie dormant or inactive: they are in perpetual operation; and, in the final result, they will appear with ineffable splendour and beauty.

"Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." Under the administration of such a Being, all events will infallibly terminate well,—well for the interests of his glory, and well for the interests of his people.

With whatever [uneasiness] we may contemplate the prevalence of moral disorder, and its portentous effects in a future state, the page of revelation assures us, that ultimately the world will be filled with holy and happy creatures; that religion and virtue will prove triumphant; and that all nations shall see the glory of God, and worship at his footstool. And with respect to the final state of the wicked, there is every reason to conclude that their numbers will bear no proportion to those of the blessed, and that thus no more misery will be inflicted than what will be rendered conducive to the order and happiness of the universe.

2. Under painful apprehensions respecting the state of the church the comforts of God are neither few nor small. It behooves us, on such occasions, to reflect that it is incomparably more his care than ours; that as the Saviour bought it with his blood, he will not fail to guide and govern it in the best manner possible. He has promised "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." His interpositions in its favour afford a pledge of what he will still accomplish: "I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Sheba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life."*

Afflictions [are] designed to purify the church.

3. Under the distressing thoughts arising from the state of a Christian, as an individual, the Divine comforts are proposed.

In temporal affliction and privations, how consoling is it to reflect that they are all ordered in infinite wisdom, proceed from the purest benignity; that they will issue in our advantage, and that they will be but of short duration. This, may the afflicted Christian reflect, is not an eternal state; these afflictions are but for a moment. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."†

* Isaiah xliii. 3, 4. † Psalm xxx. 5.

# XXX.

## ON HUMILITY BEFORE GOD.

JAMES iv. 10.—*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord.*

IN that portion of his epistle to which these words belong, we find that James is addressing, not the professed Christians, but their avowed enemies and persecutors, probably his countrymen, who still continued to display the highest antipathy to Christianity. "Whence," says he, "come wars and fightings? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye desire, and have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?"*

As the persons who were the objects of these remarks were, unquestionably, utterly estranged from the Christian religion, and the enemies of God, it is evident the duty inculcated in the words under our present notice enters into the first elements of Christian piety. It is reported of the celebrated Austin of Hippo, that being asked what was the first thing in religion, he said, "Humility;" when asked what was the second, he answered, "Humility;" and what was the third, he still returned the same answer, "Humility;"—alluding to the celebrated answer which the Athenian orator is said to have made on the subject of eloquence. It seemed to have been the intention of that great man to insinuate, that lowliness of mind, in the full extent of its operation, included nearly the whole of practical religion.

Humility may be considered in two views; either as it respects the Divine Being, or as it respects our fellow-creatures,—humility before God, or as it affects our sentiments and conduct towards men. But, while this distinction is admitted, it must be carefully remembered, that it is no longer a Christian virtue than when it originates in just conceptions of the great Parent of the universe; that the basis of all social excellence of a moral nature, is in a right state of the heart towards God. The virtues which are severed from that stock will soon languish and decay; and as they are destitute of proper principle, so are they neither stable nor permanent.

In this discourse we shall confine ourselves to the consideration of humility, in its aspect towards the Supreme Being; or, in other words, humility before God. It may be defined as consisting in that profound, habitual conviction of our nothingness, guilt, and pollution before God, which a just knowledge of ourselves will necessarily inspire. It is the rectitude of this conviction, it is its perfect conformity to the real

* James iv. 1-4.

nature of things, which renders it the object of Divine approbation. It is the agreement between the lowliness of our minds and the debasement of our character, and the depression of our state, which invests it with all its beauty, and all its value. The gracious notice which this disposition attracts is not owing to any intrinsic excellence in the object, any more than in lofty sentiments connected with a reflection on ourselves; but solely because a deep humiliation coincides with our true state and characters, as surveyed by the eye of Omniscience. In a word, it is the justness and the correctness of the feelings and convictions which enter into the composition of an humble mind, which give it all its worth.

Pride is the growth of blindness and darkness; humility, the product of light and knowledge: and while the former has its origin in a mistaken and delusive estimate of things, the latter is as much the offspring of truth as it is the parent of virtue.

Let it be observed, that the disposition under consideration is not an occasional feeling, arising from some sudden and momentary impulse; it is not a transitory depression, produced by some unexpected disclosure: in the good man, it is an habitual state of feeling; it is the quality in which his mind is uniformly attired; he is "clothed with humility." Wide and diffusive as its operation is, some conception of it may be formed by attending to the following observations:—

1. Humility in the sight of God will have a powerful influence on all our thoughts and reflections; on ourselves, on our character, condition, and prospects: a sense of inherent meanness and unworthiness in the sight of God will adhere closely to us, and will insensibly, and without effort, mingle with every recollection of the Supreme Being. A sort of self-annihilation before him will be natural and habitual; and by a recollection of his majesty, and a consciousness of our utter unworthiness to appear in his presence, we shall be no strangers to that ingenuous shame which will scarcely permit us to lift up our eyes to heaven. Under the influence of this principle, we shall be more apt to think of our faults than our virtues; of the criminal defects with which we are chargeable, than of any pretensions to excellence we may suppose ourselves to possess.

Our faults are our own; they originate entirely in ourselves; to us belong all their demerit and their shame: while for whatever inherent good we may possess, we are indebted to Divine grace, which has alone made us to differ. While there is none to share with us the baseness and turpitude of our sinful actions, our virtues are to be ultimately traced to a source out of ourselves. Hence whatever is wrong in our dispositions and conduct lays a foundation for unmingled humiliation; what is of an opposite nature supplies no pretext for unmingled self-complacency. Besides, it requires but little attention to perceive that our sins admit of no apology, while our highest attainments in holiness are accompanied by much imperfection: so that, while every pretension to merit is defeated, our demerits are real and substantial. True humbleness of mind will dispose us to form that correct estimate of ourselves which can only result from an attention to the heart, the

secret movements of which we may often perceive to be irregular and depraved where the external conduct is correct; and innumerable pollutions and disorders may be detected there by Him "who seeth in secret," when all that is visible to man is innocent and laudable.

Here a prospect is opened to the contemplation of humble piety which suggests occasion of abasement and humility before God, where [our friends] see nothing but matter of commendation and applause. It is this habit of inspecting the interior of the character, and of carrying the animadversions of conscience to the inmost thoughts and imaginations of the heart, that accounts for that unfailing lowliness and humility before God which is the constant appendage of exalted piety, and which reconciles the highest elevations of religion with the depths of self-abasement. This is sufficient to preserve alive a constant sense of deficiency in the most advanced Christian, of scattering every idea of "having already attained," and of "being already perfect," and to urge him to press forward towards the prize with unabating ardour. This was the spirit of the great apostle of the gentiles,* and of the most illustrious heroes in the cause of Christ.

The self-reflective faculty is, by the constitution of our minds, so incessantly active, and the idea of self of such frequent occurrence, that its effects on the character must be extremely different, according as it turns to the view its fairest or its darkest side. The habit on which we now speak, of directing the attention to criminal defects rather than to the excellences of the character, is not only the dictate of humility, it is the absolute suggestion of prudence. Excellences are not inspired by being often contemplated. He who delights to survey them contributes nothing by that exercise to their prosperity or growth; on the contrary, he will be tempted to rest in the self-complacency they inspire, and to relax his efforts for improvement. Their purity and lustre are best preserved in a state of seclusion from the gaze even of the possessor. But with respect to the faults and imperfections with which we are encompassed it is just the reverse;—the more they are reflected on, the more fully they are detected and exposed, the greater is the probability that their growth will be impeded, and a virtuous resolution evinced to extirpate and subdue them. To think much upon our sins and imperfections is to turn ourselves to that quarter in which our business lies. Meditating much on our virtues and good deeds is a useless occupation, since they will thrive best when abandoned to a partial oblivion.

Some consciousness, indeed, [in the Christian] of his possessing the features of a renovated mind, and even of a progress in the practice of piety, is almost unavoidable, and is not without its use, inasmuch as it supplies a motive to gratitude and a source of consolation; but the moment he finds himself drawing a self-complacency from such a retrospect, the enlightened Christian is alarmed, nor will he suffer himself to dwell long upon an object, the survey of which is so replete with danger. He hastens to check himself in that delusive train of reflection, and to recall to his [mind the persuasion] that he has "not yet

* Phil. iii. 12-14.

attained, nor is already perfect." The recollection that he is a fallen creature, exposed to righteous indignation—that his sins, though remitted, can never cease to be his, nor to retain all their turpitude and demerit—and that he is, whatever his attainments, still a child of disobedience and a pensioner on mercy;—the constant remembrance of these solemn and momentous truths is sufficient to preserve a perpetual humiliation in the sight of God.

2. Humility before God will have a beneficial influence on the mind in which divine truth is contemplated, and its discoveries received. He who is humble before God, will be so conscious of his utter insufficiency to explain the mysteries of religion, that he will be inexpressibly thankful for divine communications. He will feel and recognise his absolute need of a guide in the momentous concerns of eternity. In the obscurity of reason, heightened by the perplexities of guilt, he will distinctly perceive his entire dependence upon Heaven for every ray of information respecting the great concern of reconciliation with the offended Deity; and while he disclaims all pretension to a title to the Divine favour, he will be instantly convinced, that to solve the problem, "How man shall be just with God," must ever surpass the powers of finite reason.

Humility is the best preparation for studying the oracles of God, by destroying our confidence in every other teacher. "The meek will he guide in judgment: the meek will he teach his way."*

It is scarcely possible to conceive a greater presumption than those are guilty of who decide beforehand what it is fit and proper for revelation to communicate, and pertinaciously reject every doctrine, however clearly and unequivocally asserted, which is repugnant to their previous anticipations;—as though we possessed some independent source of information sufficiently clear and determinate to limit and control the supernatural suggestions of divine truth. The supposition on which this conduct proceeds is utterly false and preposterous. Independently of revelation, we have no data from which we can infer the purposes of God, or the method of his dealing with fallen creatures. "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath instructed him?"† None knoweth "the things of God, but the Spirit of God."‡

On the supposition we are combating, what necessity is there for revelation at all, since the pretension of being able to ascertain the contents of revelation beforehand implies a previous degree of knowledge, which makes the illumination of Scripture come too late? The necessity of revelation is founded on the supposition of insuperable ignorance; the power of ascertaining its subsequent discoveries is founded on knowledge; and the two suppositions destroy each other.

The usual pretence for rejecting some of the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel is, their mysterious nature; or, in other words, the impossibility of comprehending them in their full extent. That nothing that is repugnant to the plain dictates of reason can claim belief is readily

* Ps. xxv 9. † Rom. xi. 34. 1 Cor. ii. 16. ‡ 1 Cor. ii. 11.

admitted, because impossibilities are not the objects of power, even supposing it to be infinite; but the mysteries of the gospel are not of this nature. They include, it is true, something which we cannot fully comprehend; but they contain nothing which the legitimate exercise of reason perceives to be absurd: they surpass the limits of reason, without doing violence to its dictates. And what is more natural to expect than that the communications of Infinite Wisdom should unfold objects to our view which, in all their bearing and extent, transcend the feeble powers of a worm; or that assertions respecting the mode of Divine existence and the counsels of eternity will be found in the volume of revelation most remote from our previous conjectures? The grandeur of God, the awful, unfathomable depths of his wisdom, and the mysteriousness of his essence, would lead rather to a contrary supposition. Humility in the sight of God will at once scatter these chimeras, and bow the mind to the profoundest submission to Divine teaching. He who knows himself will be prostrate in the presence of Infinite Majesty, and say, in the language of an eminent saint, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Far from measuring the communications of heaven by the standard of a preconceived hypothesis, he will attend with child-like simplicity to the oracles of God, and endeavour to subject "every thought and imagination to the obedience of Christ." He will abandon himself with the utmost alacrity to the directions of an infallible guide. He will permit "the deep things of God" to be unfolded by that Spirit which alone is able to search them, conscious that in the concerns of eternity "the foolishness of God is wiser than men."*

With a mind truly humble, the great principle which pervades the gospel will be found peculiarly congenial; and what is this but the principle of grace? The whole system of the gospel is emphatically "the gospel of the grace of God."† It is an exhibition of unmerited favour to a guilty and perishing world; and all the blessings which it proposes to bestow, all the hopes it inspires, are ascribed to this as its origin. Every idea of human desert is anxiously excluded, while the whole provision which it makes for the wants, the whole relief it affords to the misery of man, is ascribed solely to this source. To [exhibit] to the view "of principalities and powers in heavenly places" the riches of Divine grace is its avowed end and purpose. If he has "raised us up together with Christ, and made us to sit down with him in heavenly places," it is "that he may show forth to the ages to come the surpassing riches of his grace in his kindness towards us by Jesus Christ."‡ In every stage of the stupendous undertaking, "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life."§

It is the triumph and pre-eminence of grace that forms the distinguishing character of the Christian system, and which produces that insuperable disgust with which it is contemplated by those who, "going about to establish their own righteousness, refuse to submit themselves unto the righteousness of God." Hence the attempts are in many instances too successful which are daily witnessed to disguise this its

* 1 Cor. i. 25. † Acts xx. 24. ‡ Ephes. ii. 6, 7 § Rom. v. 21.

obnoxious feature, and by certain extenuations and refinements to accommodate it to the pride of the sinful and unsanctified heart. Hence the deplorable infatuation of multitudes, who choose rather to perish in their sin than to be so entirely and deeply indebted to unmerited favour as the system of the gospel implies. But to a mind truly humbled nothing is more welcome, nothing is more delightful, than the contemplation of revealed truth under this aspect. To feel himself under an unutterable obligation is no oppressive load, from which the contrite in heart is anxious to be released. He cheerfully takes his proper place; loves to sink into the lowest depths of self-abasement; and values the blessings of salvation infinitely more for that * *

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## XXXI.

## ON PATIENCE.

HEB. x. 36.—*Ye have need of patience.*

THIS epistle was evidently directed to persons in a state of calamity and suffering, and contemplates its readers under that aspect. It was addressed to Jewish converts, who suffered from the rancorous bigotry and malice of their countrymen, who, in the commencement of Christianity, were its most violent and formidable persecutors. It attaches to some remarkable period of persecution which they had sustained immediately on their professing the gospel. "But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions, partly; while ye were made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions, and partly, while ye became companions of them that were so used."* In this trial they had conducted themselves with great constancy and firmness, "taking joyfully the spoiling of their goods." Hence the apostle takes occasion to admonish them still to persevere in the hope and profession of the gospel, intimating they were not to expect an exemption from future trials. "Ye have need of patience."

The state of Christianity, in every age, has called for the exercise and cultivation of this grace. It is a quality in the composition of a Christian which is never unnecessary, as he must not expect long to be in a situation where its exertion is not demanded.

I. The circumstances of Christians are often such as to render its exercise indispensably requisite, if they would glorify God, by evincing a suitable spirit and conduct.

1. The trials which good men are called to endure are often very

* Heb. x. 32, 33.

severe. They have their full share in the ordinary ills of life; besides trials which are peculiar to themselves, arising out of the nature of the Christian profession. On many of them poverty presses with an accumulated weight.

They find it difficult, or impossible, with all the exertions they can make, to procure an adequate provision of the necessaries of life for themselves and families. They are obliged to content themselves with a scanty and insufficient diet, with clothing insufficient to protect them from the inclemencies of the season, which is sometimes aggravated by the state of their health being such as calls for certain comforts and indulgences, which it is out of their power to procure. Their subsistance is precarious; so that when they rise in the morning they have no certainty of being able to provide for the day that is passing over them; which is enough to overcast the mind with anxious and dismal forebodings. They could endure hardships themselves perhaps with tolerable composure; but it is distressing to see the helpless and innocent babes asking, with imploring looks, for that relief from hunger which they are unable to supply. How many a pious head of a family, in this and in almost every other country, is placed, at this moment, in these afflicting circumstances! and, surely, it will be readily acknowledged that such "have need of patience."

2. The trials under which many of the people of God are labouring are various and complicated: a confluence of afflictions meet together, and heighten and exasperate each other. The evils of poverty are aggravated by sickness and bodily pain; a constitution broken down with the weight of years and infirmities is added to domestic trials and disappointments the most difficult to sustain. Those from whom assistance was expected become cool and indifferent, perhaps hostile; and the anguish arising from confidence betrayed, and friendship violated, is added to every other evil. Thus David, in his old age, when his natural strength was much abated, had to struggle with the unnatural rebellion of his son, and with the treacherous desertion of some of his most intimate and endeared friends, those with whom he had often taken sweet counsel, and gone to the house of God in company. "Had it been an enemy I could have borne it, but it was thou, mine equal and my guide." When he had reason to hope he had surmounted his difficulties, and by great exertion and resolution weathered the storms of life, and was about to enter into a peaceful harbour, a sudden hurricane arose, which drove him back into the ocean, and threatened him with total destruction. Job, in like manner, was visited with stroke upon stroke: first his property was torn from him, then his children, then his health; lastly, the friends from whom he expected support and consolation turned his enemies and accusers. As he had great need of patience, so his exemplification of it, though far from being perfect, was such as to render his name illustrious through every succeeding age.

3. When heavy and complicated trials are of long continuance,—when, after enduring them long, no prospect of deliverance appears, no

mitigation is experienced,—when there is none who can venture to set a period to calamities,—this is a circumstance that puts patience to the severest test. It is much easier to bear a very acute pain or affliction for a short time, than one much more moderate during a very protracted period. The duration of trials is a severer exercise of patience than their severity. For a certain time the soul collects itself, and summons up its resolution to bear; but when the suffering continues long, the mind becomes weary of exerting a continued effort and is apt to yield to the force of impatience and inquietude. In these several situations the Christian has need of patience.

II. Let us consider the nature and the excellence of true patience. It is a grace of the Spirit of God. God condescends to be called the "God of patience;" and [we read of] "the kingdom [and patience] of [Jesus] Christ,"—[of] "the word of his patience." By means of it they who suffer possess their souls. Another intention of this passage it is not necessary to mention: the present [being] instructive, and sufficiently adapted to the apparent design of the writer.

[There is] a great difference in the manner in which the same trials are borne by different persons:—some restless, complaining, dissatisfied with the conduct of Providence, and at all around them; others, though they feel, are yet composed, tranquil, self-possessed, capable of exercising their thoughts, and of exerting their reason, without disturbance—they "possess their souls." The happy effects of this frame of spirit are the following:—

1. He who in "patience possesses his soul" is able to trace his afflictions to the hand of God; looking through inferior instruments to the hand of the Supreme Director.

2. He is prevented from forming an erroneous and exaggerated estimate of his sufferings; from his suspecting that they are singular and unparalleled; and thus from sinking into despondency, and indulging a spirit of complaint; "knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

3. He is at leisure to [attend] to the instructions which afflictions contain, to learn those important lessons which they are best adapted to teach. Affliction is a school where we cannot learn, unless we, in some degree, possess our souls in patience. "Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee. "And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years.*

4. He who possesses his soul in patience is able to perform many important duties while in a state of suffering. It is not a barren season to him. "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass."† Much cultivation of the heart, much internal spiritual discipline, may then be exercised.

* Deut viii. 2, 4, 5. † Isaiah xxxii. 20.

5. He who thus possesses patience is at liberty to reach the promises of God to open his mind to the consolations of the gospel. He can reason with his soul—"Why art thou so cast down, O my soul?"

6. While in patience we possess our souls, we can expatiate in the views of future blessedness.

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## XXXII.

## ON CANDOUR AND LIBERALITY, AS EVINCED IN PROMOTING THE ERECTION OF PLACES OF WORSHIP.

LUKE vii. 5.—*He loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.**

IT is pleasing and instructive to behold in the narratives of Scripture frequent instances of the triumphs of divine grace over obstacles utterly insurmountable to any inferior power, and even striking examples of transcendent piety, where, considering the actual state of human nature, it was least to be expected. In these instances is verified the truth of our Lord's observation, "What is impossible with men is possible with God."

We learn that no combination of external circumstances, no profession or situation in life, however beset with temptation, no education, however unfavourable to the production of piety, ought to make us despair of attaining salvation.

Are the habits of military life peculiarly hostile to piety, and is it difficult, in connexion with these, to maintain that humility, sobriety, and heavenly-mindedness, which are so essential to religion? Our text exhibits, notwithstanding, a most eminent saint in the person of a centurion. Is a neglected or, what is still worse, a perverted education a great obstacle in the way of salvation,—an education from which religion has been entirely excluded, or religious principles inculcated, the most fatal and erroneous? Behold an instance of unparalleled

* The sermon of which the brief notes are here presented was the last, except one, that Mr. Hall preached; though the notes seem to have been prepared for a former occasion. It was delivered on the morning of February 27, 1831, the Sunday previous to the attack which terminated in death. The students in the Bristol Education Society (an institution devoted to the preparation of young men for the ministry in the Baptist persuasion) had long been in the habit of preaching in various very small places, in the more populous and wretched quarters of the city of Bristol; and their labours being found productive of much good, it was judged expedient to erect a place of worship, which might not only contain the several small companies thus assembled, but accommodate others that might be induced to attend. A considerable sum of money was accordingly raised for this purpose: the building was commenced; and in order to contribute towards the remainder of the expense, it was proposed to make a collection in Broadmead chapel. Mr. Hall very warmly seconded the project, and recommended it, with great earnestness, after his morning sermon. In the evening he preached a very impressive and splendid discourse on the text—"Take heed, and beware of covetousness," of which he does not appear to have prepared any notes. This subject he meant to apply to the case of the new place of worship; but an exceedingly heavy rain occasioning a comparatively small congregation, he stated, towards the conclusion of the sermon, that it would not be doing justice to a cause in which he felt so lively an interest, to make the collection while so few persons were present; and proposed to defer it, therefore, to a future occasion. But, alas! this was the close of his public services: and they who had so often seen his countenance beaming with intellect, benevolence, and piety, and listened to his voice with inexpressible delight, and many of them with permanent benefit, saw and heard him no more!—ED.

devotion and faith in a Roman centurion, a heathen by birth, and, as there is every reason to conclude, trained up in the practice of idolatry from his earliest infancy. Is the possession of authority apt to intoxicate man with pride, and especially in proportion as that authority is arbitrary and despotic? We have here, in a Roman officer, a pattern of the deepest humility. Having occasion to apply to our Lord for the cure of his servant, he would not admit of his giving himself the trouble of coming in person, from a conviction that it was unnecessary, and that he was undeserving of such honour. Finally, are mankind apt to be ill affected to each other on account of difference of national character, and the opposition which [exists in their religion?] The opposition, in this respect, between the Romans and the Jews was as great as can well be imagined. The Romans were devoted to idolatry, and looked upon the Jews, who refused to join in the worship of idols, as a sort of atheists; they hated them for their singularity and their supposed unnatural antipathy to all other nations; and, at this time, despised them as a conquered people. The centurion, though he had been nursed in these prejudices, and was now, by very profession, employed in maintaining the Roman authority over Judea, yet "loved the Jewish nation, built them a synagogue," and sought an interest in the affections of that people; so that the Jewish elders, sympathizing with him under his distress, are the bearers of his message to our Lord.

Let us attend to the hints of instruction suggested by the character which they here give of the centurion.

I. "He loveth our nation."

We have already remarked the superiority to prejudice which this trait in his character implies. We now observe, his attachment to the Jewish nation rested on solid grounds; it was such an attachment that it was next to impossible for a good man not to feel. The Jews were the only people in the world, before the coming of Christ, who were taken into an express covenant with God. To them he stood in a relation different from that which he sustained towards any other people. He was their proper national head and king. The covenant on which he became so was entered into at Mount Sinai, when Jehovah descended in a visible manner, uttered his laws in an audible voice, and, by the express consent of the people, communicated to Moses those statutes and ordinances which were ever after to form the basis of their polity, civil and religious, and a perpetual barrier of separation between them and other nations. Conducted by a train of the most astonishing miracles to the land of Canaan, God was pleased to dwell among them by a miraculous symbol, and to make them the depositaries of true religion. Thus the will of God was known and his worship celebrated, while surrounding nations were sunk in the deepest ignorance. A succession of prophets was raised up at different periods; a body of inspired truths was communicated; a peculiar system of providence established, as far as their affairs were concerned; and a series of predictions preserved, by which an expectation was excited of the appearance of a divine person of their race, who was to be the "light of the gentiles," "the glory of Israel," the person in whom

"all the nations of the earth were to be blessed." These high privileges and prerogatives are thus enumerated by St. Paul: "Who am an Israelite, of whom is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is God over all blessed for evermore."

As the centurion derived his knowledge of the Supreme Being from the Jews, either by conversing with them or attending [their worship,] he necessarily felt himself attached to that nation.

Religious benefits, as they are incomparably superior to all others, lay a foundation for the strongest attachment among men. If we are taught rightly to appreciate spiritual favours, we shall feel veneration and respect for those who, under God, have been the instruments of conveying them to us, far superior to what we feel towards any other persons.

To love the Jewish nation is still a natural dictate of piety. To that nation we are indebted for the records of inspiration, and the light of the gospel; for the men who, under the direction of the Spirit, composed the former and published the latter among the pagans were all Jews. Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, let it be remembered, were Jews; and though the Israelitish race are for the present suffering the vengeance of the Almighty for rejecting the Messiah, the blessings yet in reserve for them, to be bestowed at a future season, are great and signal. Separated for a time from the church of God for their unbelief, the period of their exaltation is deferred, but their glory is not extinguished: "As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election, they are beloved for their fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." They are the seed of a glorious church, the stock of which remains in the earth; but which, at a future time, will revive and flourish in the beauty of holiness, and send forth its branches to the end of the earth. Though they have long lain "in the valley of vision till their bones are become very dry," yet the Lord in his own time, and that not a remote one, will "call to the four winds, the Spirit of God will revive them, their sinews will come upon their flesh, will cover them, and they shall live." As the Jews were the first instruments in converting the nations to the faith of Jesus, so, we doubt not, it is to them the honour is reserved of the final and universal propagation of the gospel: for "if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the gentiles, how much more their fulness?" On this account, when we behold the miserable outcasts of the Jewish nation, it is natural and proper for us to feel in a manner similar to what we are accustomed to do on beholding a prince in exile and captivity, with the difference which arises from the certainty of their being restored to more than their former splendour; "when the Deliverer shall come from Sion, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob."

Was the Jewish nation an object of respect to the devout worshipper of God? How much more are the servants of Christ entitled to the same

respect! The servants of Christ are "the true circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." They succeeded to the spiritual privileges of the Jewish church, and enjoy them in a still higher degree. They are the salt of the earth; they are, through the illuminations of the Sun of Righteousness, the "light of the world," the "city set on a hill, which cannot be hid."

The love of God will never fail to manifest itself, by saving those, in every sect and denomination, who appear to be partakers of his holiness. "Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." With all their imperfections, true Christians will invariably be esteemed by a good man as the excellent of the earth.

Having contemplated the attachment which the centurion displayed to the people of God, let us next consider in what manner his attachment was evinced. It was not an empty profession, productive of no fruit.

II. He "hath built us a synagogue." The original words are more emphatic: "*It is he who built us a synagogue.*" Synagogues were places of worship, where the Jews were wont to assemble on their Sabbath, to hear the law and the prophets read and interpreted, accompanied with suitable exhortations to the people, and to present prayer and praise to God. Wherever ten Jews resided who were at leisure to attend the worship of God at ordinary times, as well as on the Sabbath, it was the opinion of the Jewish rabbies a Synagogue ought to be erected. Thither the people resorted, not only to hear the law, but also to offer up their supplications; the times of prayer, which were at nine in the morning, at noon, and at three o'clock in the evening, corresponding to the times of presenting the morning and evening incense. These buildings for public worship were very much multiplied: at Jerusalem there were many hundreds of them; at Alexandria they were also prodigiously numerous; and there was scarcely a town where any number of Jews resided where there was not one or more. They were governed by a council of elders, over whom presided an officer called the angel of the synagogue, whence the title of angel is supposed to be given in the Revelation to the presiding elder or bishop in the Christian church.

In each synagogue a discipline was established for the support of purity of manners: and punishments were sometimes inflicted on notorious transgressors of the law. Thus we read of Saul, afterward named Paul, scourging men and women in the synagogues.

These places of worship are supposed to have taken rise among the Jews after the return from the Babylonish captivity; at least, we find no distinct traces of them before, though it was customary, even in the days of Elisha, to resort for instruction to the prophets, on the new moons and the Sabbaths.

They were a most important appendage to the temple-worship, and a principal cause of preventing the Israelites from relapsing into idolatry to which they were before so strongly addicted. Instead of assembling at Jerusalem three times a year, where no public instruction was

delivered, but sacrifices and offerings only presented by the priest, the people, by means of synagogues, had an opportunity of listening to the writings of Moses and the prophets every Sabbath-day, the officiating ministers publicly harangued the people, and the persons who frequented the synagogue were united in religious society. While the temple-service was admirably adapted to preserve the union of the nation, and to prevent innovations in the public solemnities of religion, the synagogues were equally calculated for an increase of personal piety and to perpetuate in the minds of the people the knowledge of revealed truth. After these were established, degenerate as the sons of Israel became, we never read of their relapsing into idolatry. The denunciations of the law were so often thundered in their ears, the calamities which their fathers had suffered for this offence were too familiar to their recollection, ever to allow them thus "to tempt the Lord to jealousy."

There is undoubtedly a great resemblance between the edifices erected for public worship among us and those of the Jews. They appear to me to bear a much greater analogy to the synagogues than to the temple. The temple was a single building, which the Israelites were forbidden to multiply, it being designed to be a centre of union to the whole nation, as well as the immediate seat of the Divine presence, which was confined to that spot: synagogues might be built at pleasure, and were spread over the whole land. The very idea of a temple is that of an immediate habitation of the Deity, who manifests himself there in a supernatural manner, or, at least, is believed so to do by his votaries. In the heathen temples, after they were duly consecrated, the gods in whose honour they were erected were supposed to take an immediate and preternatural possession of them. What was mere pretence or delusion among the heathen was at the temple of Jerusalem an awful reality: the Lord visibly "dwelt between the cherubim." In places set apart for Christian worship, there were no such visible tokens of the presence of God. The manner of his presence is spiritual, not local; he dwells in the hearts of his worshippers. St. Stephen taught the Jewish nation, that it was one of the distinctions of the Christian dispensation that the Highest no longer "dwelleth in temples made with hands." An altar, a sacrifice, and a priest were the necessary appendages of the temple. But, among Christians, we have no altar so called but the cross; no priest but the Son of God, who remaineth "a priest for ever;" and no sacrifice but the sacrifice "once offered for the sins of the world." The priestly office of Christ put an end to the typical priesthood of the sons of Aaron. It is an everlasting priesthood, and admits of no rival or substitute. In popular language, indeed, we give the appellation to that order of men who are set apart to minister in sacred things; and it is of no consequence, providing we recollect that it is but figurative language, not designed to be rigorously exact: for the apostolic definition of a priest, in the strict sense of the word, is one "taken from among men, and ordained for men in things pertaining to God, tha may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins." In the temple-service no provision was made for the regular instruction

of the people in the principles of religion beyond what the more serious attention might call out from the typical import of its services, which were indeed "a shadow of good things to come," and obscurely pointed to the Saviour. It was erected as a place of national rendezvous, where God gave audience to the people as their temporal sovereign, and received their sin-offerings and peace-offerings, as an acknowledgment of their offences and tokens of their allegiance. The ceremonial institution was then in the highest degree pompous and splendid. Synagogues were established, it has already been observed, for the worship of individuals, for the instruction of the people in religious principles, and for the exercise of prayer and devotion every Sabbath, as well as on other suitable occasions. The mode of worship was plain and simple, and more corresponding to the genius of Christianity.

To this we must add, that the platform of the church was framed, in a great measure, on the plan of the Jewish synagogues, as is generally acknowledged by the most learned men. The Scriptures were read and interpreted in both, which was the origin of preaching; prayer was addressed to God in the name of the congregation; each was governed by a council of elders, over which one presided, which gave birth to the title of bishops; and irregularities of conduct and errors in doctrine were the subjects of censure and animadversion. Excommunication in the Christian church was similar in its effects to an expulsion from the synagogue. So great was the resemblance between Christian assemblies and synagogues, that they are sometimes, in Scripture, used as synonymous terms. "If there come into your assembly," says St. James, "a man with a gold ring, or goodly apparel:" in the original it is *synagogue*. We need not be surprised at that close analogy we have traced, when we reflect that the first converts to Christianity were principally Jews, who, incorporating themselves into societies, adopted, as far as they were permitted by the Holy Ghost, the usages and forms to which they had so long been accustomed.

III. The passage which is the ground of this discourse represents the conduct of the centurion as highly praiseworthy and exemplary. "He is worthy," say the Jewish elders, "for whom thou shouldst do this; for he loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue."

To assist in the erection of places of worship, providing it proceed from right motives, is unquestionably an acceptable service to the Most High. Whatever extends his worship, in facilitating the means of it, is directly calculated to promote his glory and the salvation of men, with which the worship is inseparably connected. The service and worship of God is the very end of our creation; the perfection of it constitutes the glory of heaven; and its purity and spirituality, in whatever degree they subsist, are the chief ornaments of earth.

The increase of places dedicated to public worship ought surely to be no matter of lamentation or offence. They are rendered necessary by the increase of population. It is this which renders that accommodation quite inadequate at present which was sufficient in former times. The edifices devoted to the established religion in our country

are plainly too few, and the accommodation afforded to the poor especially too scanty, were the people ever so well disposed, to accommodate all who might wish to resort to them. Were I to advance this on my own [authority,] I am well aware it would be entitled to little weight. I must be allowed to corroborate it by the testimony of one of the most distinguished ornaments of the Church of England, a clergyman, a man of elevated rank, of enlarged and profound observation, and of exalted piety, who notices this evil in the following terms:—"Where are the poor in our large towns, where are the poor in the metropolis to find room? One of the consequences obviously resulting from this deficiency, wherever it subsists, of accommodation in a parochial church for the poor is this, that they are reduced to the alternative of frequenting no place of worship, or of uniting themselves with some of the Methodists or dissenters. Each branch of the alternative has been adopted within my knowledge. That those who cannot obtain admittance into our places of worship should frequent the religious assemblies of some of our brethren in Christ who differ from us, ought to be a subject of thankfulness to ourselves. But are we justified in driving them from truth which we regard as simple, and as taught under very favourable circumstances, to truth blended with error, or presented under circumstances of disadvantage?" The preference this writer avows for his own denomination is such as becomes every honest man; while the favourable opinion he avows of the designs of others does honour to his head and heart.

Till the legislature will exert itself, by adopting some effectual measure for the more extensive accommodation of the people in parochial churches, no enlightened friend of religion will complain of the supply of this deficiency by the exertions of persons out of the pale of the establishment. It is above all things necessary to the welfare of the state, to the salvation of souls, and the glory of God, that public worship should be supported and upheld: in what edifices, or with what forms, providing heresy and idolatry are excluded, is a consideration of inferior moment. We do not differ from our brethren in the establishment in essentials; we are not of two distinct religions: while we have conscientious objections to some things enjoined in their public service, we profess the same doctrines which they profess; we worship the same God; we look for salvation through the blood of the same Mediator; we implore the agency of the same blessed Spirit by whom we all have access to the Father; we have the same rule of life; and maintain, equally with them, the necessity of that "holiness without which none shall see the Lord."

The increasing demand for new places of worship, or for enlarging the old, arises, in a great part, from the increased attention paid to the concerns of religion.

## XXXIII.

### ON THE REWARD OF THE PIOUS IN HEAVEN.

MATT. v. 12.—*Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.*

THE gospel of Christ is not intended to extinguish or impair the natural sensibility of the human mind; but to purify and refine it, rather, by directing it to its proper objects. It proposes to transfer the affections from earth to heaven,—from a world of shadows and illusions to a world where all is real, substantial, and eternal. By connecting the present with the future, by teaching us to consider every event in its relation to an hereafter, it presents almost every thing under a new aspect, and gives birth to such views of human life as, on a superficial observation, appear false and paradoxical. What can appear more so than to call upon men to "rejoice and be exceeding glad," when they are persecuted and reproached, and loaded with every kind of calumny? Yet such, we find, is the language of that Teacher who, "coming from above, is above all."

Nor is there any difficulty in admitting the justness and propriety of the sentiment contained in this injunction, when it is added, "for great is your reward in heaven." A consummation so glorious throws a lustre over all the preparatory scenes, and turns into an occasion of joy and exultation that from which we should otherwise recoil with horror. We may reasonably be expected to welcome the short-lived pains which are to be followed by eternal pleasures, and those temporary reproaches which will be compensated with everlasting glory.

I. The felicity which awaits those who persevere, through good and evil report, in a steadfast adherence to Christ, is frequently expressed in the Scriptures by the name of *reward*. It is almost unnecessary to remind you that this term is not on such occasions to be taken in its most strict and proper sense, as though the patience and perseverance of the saints *deserved* eternal felicity. Nothing is more opposed to the doctrine of Scripture, and the feelings of a real Christian, than such an idea. It is true, the inspired writers evince no reluctance to employ this term. Our Lord declares, "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward; and whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, he shall in no wise lose his reward."* "Love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be called the children of the Highest."† St. Paul assures us, "Every man shall receive his own reward: if any man's work abide, he shall receive a

* Matt. x. 41, 42 † Luke vi. 35

reward."* "Let no man beguile you of your reward."† "Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."‡ "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be."§ But still we must never lose sight of its true nature—that "it is of grace, not of debt." It is what the infinite condescension of God is pleased to bestow on those who love [him,] not what any *man* claims as equitably due: for our best performances are mixed with sinful imperfections, which need themselves to be pardoned; not to say that the ability to perform them is the effect of renewing and sanctifying grace; so that while in one sense they are our deeds, they are in another his donations.

The felicity which God will bestow upon his faithful servants may be properly denominated *a reward*, on the following accounts:—

1. It is inseparably joined to obedience, and is promised as a motive to encourage and sustain it. Christ will be the "Author of eternal salvation to them," and them only, "who obey him."‖

2. It will be bestowed expressly as a mark of approbation and acceptance of the obedience to which it is annexed. It will be bestowed as a token and demonstration of God's complacency in righteousness. "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels."¶ "And he said unto him, Well done, thou good servant; because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities."**

3. *The reward*, the felicity bestowed, will be proportioned to the degree of religious improvement, "to the work of faith and labour of love." We are reminded of those who are "saved as by fire;" and of those who have "an abundant entrance;" of "a righteous man's," and of "a prophet's reward;" of some who "sow sparingly," and of others who "sow bountifully," both of whom shall reap accordingly.

II. Having said enough to establish the Scripture idea of rewards, I proceed to the more immediate object in view, which is, by a comparison of both, to evince the superiority of heavenly to earthly rewards, of its recompenses to those of time.

1. The rewards of heaven are certain. Whether we shall possess them or not may be matter of great uncertainty, because it is possible we may not be of the description of persons to whom they are promised. The heirs of salvation may, at certain seasons, entertain doubts of their finally obtaining them; but they are in themselves certain, since they are secured by the "promise of him who cannot lie."

On this account they are strikingly contrasted with earthly recompenses. The most passionate votary of the world is never certain he shall possess an adequate recompense for all his toil, and care, and earthly sacrifices. How often does she mock her followers with delusive hopes, entangle them in endless cares, and exhaust them with hopeless and consuming passions; and after all assign them no com-

* 1 Cor. iii. 8, 14 † Col. ii. 18. ‡ Matt. vi. 6. § Rev. xxii. 12.
‖ Heb. v. 9. ¶ 2 Thess. i. 6, 7 ** Luke xix. 17.

pensation. After years of unremitting fatigue and unceasing anxiety the object they have pursued eludes their grasp, or appears as remote as ever, till, at the close of life, they are compelled to sit down in hopeless disappointment, and confess that they have "sown to the wind, and reaped the whirlwind." Of the many prizes which the world exhibits to human hope, there is not one whose possession is certain; nor is there a single desire with which she inspires her votaries but what is liable to become a source of anguish, by being disappointed of its gratification. Whatever be the immediate object of pursuit, success depends on circumstances quite out of our power; we are often as much injured by the folly of others as by our own. If the object which we are pursuing be highly desirable, others feel its attraction as well as ourselves; and we find ourselves engaged in a race where there are many competitors, but only one can gain the prize.

How different is it with heavenly rewards! In relation to them, no well-meant effort is unsuccessful. We lay up as much treasure there as we sincerely and perseveringly endeavour to accumulate; nor is the success of our efforts liable to be defeated by the jealousy of rivals.

Our attempts to promote the benefit of our fellow-creatures are estimated according to their events rather than their intentions; and, however sincere and zealous they may have been, unless they are productive of some probable benefit, they are treated with neglect and ingratitude.

How different in regard to the recompenses of Heaven! He will reward, not only the services we have performed, but those which it was our wish to have performed. The sincere intention is recompensed as well as the deed. "Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayst judge my people, over whom I have made thee king: wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee."* The friendship of mankind is sometimes as much endangered by the greatness of the benefit conferred as by neglect; and while little acts of attention and kindness cement the ties of friendship, such is the perverseness of human nature, that great favours weaken and dissolve them.

While they are sufficiently aware of the advantages that they derive, they hate the obligation which they entail; and feeling themselves incapable of making an adequate return, they consult at once their pride and their indolence by forgetting it. But how different is it in relation to the Supreme Being! we can never lay him under obligation; yet his kindness disposes, while his opulence enables, him to reward in the most liberal manner.

Many are so immersed in meanness and folly that they have little care but to be amused: the voice of truth and the admonitions of wisdom are discord to their ear; and he who desires to conciliate their regard must not attempt to do them good, but must sooth their pride, inflame their corruptions, and hasten on their destruction. They are

* 2 Chron. i. 11.

of the temper of Ahab, the king of Israel, who caressed the false prophets that lured him on to his ruin, while he avowed his hatred of Micaiah, because he "prophesied evil of him, and not good."*

The disinterested patriot who devotes his nights and days to promote the interests of his country may very probably fall a victim to its vengeance, by being made answerable for events beyond human foresight or control; and one unsuccessful undertaking shall cancel the remembrance of a series of the most brilliant achievements.

The most important services frequently fail of being rewarded when they are not recommended by their union with the ornamental appendages of rank or fortune. "There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it: now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man."† From these and various other causes that might be specified, we see how uncertain are the recompenses of this world, and how delusive the expectations they excite, and to what cruel reverses and disappointments they are exposed.

How different the reward which awaits us in heaven; how infallibly certain the promise of Him that cannot lie; how secure the treasure that is laid up in heaven, which "rust cannot corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal!" They are not liable to the fluctuations of time and chance, but are secured by the promise and the oath of God.

II. The recompenses of heaven are satisfying. How far this quality is from attaching to the emoluments and pleasures of this world universal experience can attest. They are so far from satisfying, that their effect uniformly is to inflame the desires which they fail to gratify.

The pursuit of riches is one of the most common and the most seductive which occupy the attention of mankind, and no doubt they assume at a distance a most fascinating aspect. They flatter their votary with the expectation of real and substantial bliss; but no sooner has he attained the portion of opulence to which he aspired, than he feels himself as remote as ever from satisfaction. The same desire revives with fresh vigour; his thirst for further acquisitions is more intense than ever; what he before esteemed riches sinks in his present estimation to poverty, and he transfers the name to ampler possessions and larger revenues. Say, did you ever find the votary of wealth who could sit down contented with his present acquisitions? Nor is it otherwise with the desire of fame, or the love of power and pre-eminence.

The man of pleasure is still, if possible, under a greater incapacity of finding satisfaction. The violence of his desires renders him a continual prey to uneasiness; imagination is continually suggesting new modes and possibilities of indulgence, which subject him to fresh agitation and disquiet. A long course of prosperity, a continued series of indulgences, produces at length a sickly sensibility, a childish impatience of the slightest disappointment or restraint. One desire

* 1 Kings xxii. 8. † Eccles. ix. 14, 15

ungratified is sufficient to mar every enjoyment, and to impair the relish for every other species of good. Witness Haman, who, after enumerating the various ingredients of a most brilliant fortune, adds, "Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting in the gate."*

The recompenses of the world are sometimes just, though they never satisfy; hence the frequency of suicide. * * *

III. The recompenses of heaven are eternal.

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## XXXIV.

### ON TAKING THE NAME OF GOD IN VAIN.

**Exodus xx. 7.**—*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.*

The laws given to the Israelites were of three kinds—ceremonial, judicial, and moral. The ceremonial consisted of those religious observances and rites which were partly intended to separate the peculiar people of God from surrounding nations, and partly to prefigure the most essential truths and blessings which were to be communicated to mankind at the advent of the Messiah. These, being in their [nature] typical, necessarily ceased when the great Personage to whom they pointed made his appearance. The judicial laws respected the distribution of property, the rights of rulers and subjects, and the mode of deciding controversies, together with a variety of other particulars relating to civil polity, which is always of a variable and mutable nature. The third sort are moral: these are founded in the nature of things, and the reciprocal relations in which God and man stand towards each other, and are consequently unchangeable, since the principles on which they are founded are capable of no alteration. The two former sorts of laws are not obligatory upon Christians, nor did they, while they were in force, oblige any besides the people to which they were originally addressed. They have waxed old, decayed, and passed away. But the third sort are still in force, and will remain the unalterable standard of right and wrong, and the rule throughout all [periods of time.] The Ten Commandments, or the "Ten Words, as the expression is in the original, uttered by God, in an audible voice, from Mount Sinai, belong to the third class. They are a transcript of the law of nature, which prescribes the inherent and essential duties which spring from the relation which mankind bear to God and to each other. The first four respect the duty we owe to God, and the last six that which we owe to our fellow-creatures. The first ascertains the object of worship; the second the mode of worship, forbidding all

* Esther v. 13.

visible representations of the Deity by pictures or images; the third inculcates the reverence due to the Divine name; the fourth the observation of the Sabbath, or of a seventh part of our time to be devoted to the immediate service of God. These ten rules, in order to mark their pre-eminent importance and obligation, were inscribed by the finger of God on two tables of stone, which Moses was commanded to prepare for that purpose.

Our attention is at present directed to the third of these precepts—"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain;" in treating of which we shall endeavour,—

I. To determine what is forbidden in this commandment; and,

II. The grounds on which this prohibition proceeds.

I. In considering what is forbidden by the precept before us, it were easy to multiply particulars; but the true import of it may, if I am not mistaken, be summed up in the two following:—

1. It forbids perjury, or the taking up the name [of God] for the purpose of establishing falsehood. Vanity is frequently used in Scripture for wickedness, and particularly for that species of wickedness which consists in falsehood; and after all that has been [advanced] on that famous saying of our Lord, "every *idle* word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment,"* it is most probable that he means by idle word, a word which is morally evil, partaking of the nature of falsehood, malice, pride, or impurity. It is in this [view] only, as it appears to me, that the truth of our Lord's saying can be soberly and consistently maintained. When the pretended prophets are threatened on account of their uttering vain visions, the vanity ascribed to them meant their falsehood. In all civilized countries recourse has been had to oaths, which are solemn appeals to God respecting a matter of fact for the determination of controversies which could not be decided without the attestation of the parties concerned, and of other competent witnesses. Hence an oath is said by the apostle to be "an end of all strife."† To take a false oath on such occasions, which is the crime of perjury, is one of the most atrocious violations of the law of nature and of God which can be committed, since it involves two crimes in one; being at once a deliberate insult to the majesty of God, and an act of the highest injustice towards our fellow-creatures.

A perjured person is accordingly branded with infamy, as well as subjected to severe punishment, which is equally demanded by the honour of God and the welfare of society. It may be reasonably hoped there is no person in this assembly who has been guilty of this crime, or is under any strong temptation to commit it. But I cannot omit this opportunity of expressing regret that the multiplication of oaths by the legislature in the affairs of revenue and of commerce has tended to render them too cheap, and has greatly diminished the horror with which the very idea of a false oath ought to be accompanied. Though it is always lawful to swear to a fact of which we are well

* Matt. xii 36. † Heb. vi. 16.

assured, at the requisition of a magistrate or a public functionary; yet it deserves the attention of a Christian legislator, whether the introduction [of oaths] on every the slightest occasion can have any other tendency than to defeat the purpose, by rendering them of no authority; to say nothing of the blow which it strikes at the root of public morals.

If it was a complaint made by an ancient prophet, "By reason of swearing the land mourneth," we have assuredly not less reason to adopt the same complaint. Perjury, it is to be feared, is an epidemic vice in this nation. Among many it is reduced to a system; and, awful to relate, there is, as I am credibly informed, a tribe of men who make it their business to take false oaths at the custom-house, for which they are paid a stated price. The name by which these wretched men are known is, it must be confessed, highly apposite; they are styled *damned souls.** But to proceed.

2. The second way in which this precept is violated is the profane use of the name of God on trivial occasions; in familiar discourses, whether it be in mirth or in anger. There are some men who are in the constant habit of interlarding their common discourses with the name of God; generally in the form of swearing, at other times in the language of cursing and execration, without any assignable motive, except it be to give an air of superior spirit and energy to their language. The mention of the Deity is often so introduced as evidently to appear a mere expletive; nor is any thing more common than to hear such persons declare they absolutely mean nothing by it. When persons of this description are inflamed with anger, it is usual for them to express their resentment in the form of the most dreadful execrations, wishing the damnation of their fellow-creatures. There are multitudes who are scarce ever heard to make mention of the name of the Deity but upon such occasions.

To evince the criminality and impiety of this practice, let me request your serious attention to the following considerations:—

(1.) The practice of using the name of God on slight and trivial occasions is in direct opposition, not only to the passage [selected for our meditation], but also to a variety of others which identify the character of God with his name. He demands the same respect to be paid to his name as to himself. When the prophet Isaiah foretels the propagation of true religion, he expresses it in the following terms:— "They shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel."† "I will sanctify my great name."‡ The piety of the tribe of Levi is thus expressed:—"My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name."§ "I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen."‖ The respect which God pays to his name is a frequent plea with the saints of God in their supplications for mercy: "What

* On Friday, the 15th of July, 1831, the Marquis of Lansdowne declared in the House of Peers, on introducing a bill for the regulation of oaths in certain government departments, that 10,000 oaths were taken in the department of the Customs, and 12,000 in that of the Excise, during the preceding year.—Ed.

† Isa. xxix. 23 ‡ Ezek. xxxvi. 23 § Mal. ii. 5. ‖ Mal. i. 14.

wilt thou do unto thy great name?"* "If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayst fear this glorious and fearful name, The Lord thy God."†

When our Lord directs us to pray that all due reverence [be given to that name], he expresses it thus:—"Hallowed be thy name." It is proper to remark, that as there were "gods many, and lords many," among the heathen, to distinguish himself from these pretended deities he was pleased to reveal himself to Abraham and to his descendants under the peculiar name of JEHOVAH, which signifies essential, independent, and unchanging existence.‡ The reverence paid to this name among the Jews was carried to the greatest possible height: it was never pronounced in common, nor even read in their synagogues; but whenever it occurred in the Scriptures, the word Adonai was substituted in its place. Among Christians, God has not been pleased to assume any appropriate appellation; but, as the existence of the pretended deities is entirely exploded, the term God invariably denotes the One Supreme. The meaning of it is no longer ambiguous, it always represents the true God; and whatever respect was justly due to the name of Jehovah among the Jews is equally due to that term which is appropriated among Christians to denote the existence and perfections of the same glorious Being. Hence it follows, that when we are taught to pray that the name of God may be hallowed, the meaning of that petition [is] that [the] appellation, whatever it be, by which the Supreme Being, in the various languages of the world, is denoted, may be duly reverenced. The term God among Christians is no more ambiguous than the term Jehovah among the Jews; it denotes one and the same object: and it is therefore as criminal for us to use the one with levity as a similar treatment of the other would have been among the Jews. And hence it is manifest that the whole spirit of the passages here quoted, respecting the name of God, is applicable in its full weight to the subject before us, and directly militates against the practice we are now condemning.

(2.) From the remarks which have been made it follows, that the practice of using [his name] lightly, and [on] trivial occasions, is an infallible indication of irreverence towards God. As there is no [adequate] method of communicating [thought] but by words, which, though arbitrary in themselves, are agreed upon as the signs of ideas, no sooner are they employed but they call up the ideas they are intended to denote. When language is established, there exists a close and inseparable connexion between words and things, insomuch that we cannot pronounce or hear one without thinking of the other. Whenever the term God, for instance, is used, it excites among Christians the idea of the incomprehensible Author of nature: this idea it may excite with more or less force and impression, but it invariably excites that idea, and no other. Now, to connect the idea of God with what is most frivolous and ridiculous is to treat it with contempt; and as we can only contemplate [objects] under their ideas, to feel no

* Josh. vii. 9. † Deut. xxviii. 58. ‡ See p. 12–16.

reverence for the idea of God is precisely the same thing as to feel a contempt for God. He who thinks of [the name of] God without being awed by it cannot pretend to be a fearer of God; but it is impossible to use the name of God lightly and unnecessarily without being in that predicament. It is evident, beyond all contradiction, that such a man is in the habit of thinking of God without the least reverential emotion. He could not associate the idea of God with levity, buffoonery, and whatsoever is mean and ridiculous, if he had not acquired a most criminal insensibility to his character, and to all the awful peculiarities it involves. Suppose a person to be penetrated with a deep contrition for his sins, and a strong apprehension of the wrath of God, which is suspended over him; and are you not [immediately] aware of the impossibility of his using the name of the Being who is the object of all these emotions as a mere expletive? Were a person to pretend to the character of an humble penitent, and at the same time to take the name of God in vain, in the way to which we are now alluding, would you give the smallest credit to his pretensions? How decisive then must that indication of irreverence be which is sufficient to render the very profession of repentance ridiculous!

But this practice is not only inconsistent with that branch of religion which [constitutes] repentance; it is equally inconsistent with sincere, much more with supreme, esteem and veneration. No child could bear to hear the name of a father whose memory he highly respected and venerated treated in the manner in which the name of the Supreme Being is introduced. It would be felt and resented as a high degree of rudeness and indignity. There is, in short, no being whatever, who is the object of strong emotion, whose distinguishing appellations could be mentioned in this manner without the utmost absurdity and indelicacy. Nothing can be more certain than that the taking the name of God in vain infallibly indicates a mind in which the reverence of God has no place. But is it possible to conceive a state of mind more opposite to reason and order than this? To acknowledge the existence of a Supreme Being, our Maker and Preserver, possessed of incomprehensible perfection, on whom we are totally dependent throughout every moment of duration, and in every stage of our existence, without feeling the profoundest awe and reverence of him, is an impropriety, a moral absurdity, which the utmost range of language and conception is inadequate to paint. If we consider the formal nature of sin as a deliberate transgression of the Divine law, it resolves itself chiefly into this, that it implies a contempt of infinite Majesty, and supreme power and authority. This disposition constitutes the very core and essence of sin. It is not merely the character of the wicked that they contemn God; it enters deeply into the character of wickedness itself; nor is there a heavier charge, among their complicated crimes, adduced against the ancient Israelites, than that they "lightly esteemed the Rock of their salvation."*

With respect to the profane oaths and execrations which most of

* Deut. xxxii. 15.

those who are habituated to "take the name of God in vain" frequently utter when they are transported with emotions of anger, their criminality is still greater as they approach the confines of blasphemy. To hurl damnation at our fellow-creatures whenever they have fallen under our displeasure is precisely the conduct of the fool described by Solomon, who "casteth about firebrands, arrows, and death, and saith, Am not I in sport?"*

We will do them the justice of supposing that they are far from really wishing the eternal destruction of their fellow-creatures; but, admitting this to be the case, admitting they have no such intention, is not this more than to insinuate that these terms have absolutely no meaning, and that the sanction of the Divine law, the punishment of a future state, have no such existence, but are become mere figures of speech,—that Christianity is exploded, and that its most awful doctrines, like the fables of pagan superstition, serve only the purpose of allusion? Is it possible for him who lives under an habitual conviction of there being an eternal state of misery reserved for the impenitent, to [advert to] the terrors of that world on every slight occasion to give additional force to the expressions of his anger?

(3.) The practice of taking the Lord's name in vain is not only a great indication of want of reverence for God, but is calculated to wear out all serious religion from the mind. The effect of associating the most awful words expressive of religious objects with every thing which is mean and degrading, is adapted, in the highest degree, to sink them into contempt. He who has reflected the least on the laws of the human mind must be aware of the importance of association, or of that principle in consequence of which ideas and emotions which have been frequently presented to the mind at the same time naturally recall each other. It is by virtue of this law of nature, principally, that habits are formed, and that the links which connect things in the memory are constituted. By virtue of this it is that objects which have been frequently presented along with ludicrous and ridiculous circumstances acquire a character of ridicule. Hence the art of turning persons or things into ridicule is to place them in juxtaposition with what is low and trivial; in consequence of which the emotion of contempt excited by the latter is made to adhere to the former, and stamps them with a similar character. These remarks, obvious as they are, may be sufficient to evince the pernicious effect of taking the Lord's name in vain. Though it is not the formal design of those who indulge this practice to turn the most sacred objects into ridicule, it perfectly answers that purpose as much as if it were their professed intention.

The practice [whose evils] we are endeavouring to [point out] will be more certainly productive of that effect, because it is usually connected with a total absence of the mention of God on all other occasions. Among this description of persons the name and attributes of the Supreme Being, and the punishments of eternity, are rarely, if ever, introduced but in the way of profanation.

If the most awful terms in religion are rarely or never employed but

* Prov. xxvi. 18, 19.

in connexion with angry or light emotions, he must be blind indeed who fails to perceive the tendency of such a practice to wear out all traces of seriousness from the mind. They who are guilty of it are continually taking lessons of impiety, and their progress, it must be confessed, is proportioned to what might be expected.

(4.) The criminality of taking the Lord's name in vain is enhanced by the absence of every reasonable temptation. It is not, like many other vices, productive of either pleasure or emolument; it is neither adapted to gratify any natural appetite or passion, nor to facilitate the attainment of a single end which a reasonable creature can be supposed to have in view. It is properly the "superfluity of naughtiness," and can only be considered as a sort of peppercorn rent, in acknowledgment of the devil's right of superiority. It is a vice by which no man's reputation is extended, no man's fortune is increased, no man's sensual gratifications are augmented. If we attempt to analyze it, and reduce it to its real motive, we find ourselves at a total loss to discover any other than irreligious ostentation, a desire of convincing the world that its perpetrators are not under the restraint of religious fear. But as this motive is most impious and detestable, so the practice arising from it is not at all requisite for that purpose; since the persons who [persist in] it may safely leave it to other parts of their character to exonerate them from the suspicion of being fearers of God. We beg leave to remind them that they are in no danger of being classed with the pious either in this world or in that which is to come, and may therefore safely spare themselves the trouble of inscribing the name of their master on their foreheads. They are not so near to the kingdom of God as to be liable to be mistaken for its subjects.

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## XXXV.

## ON THE ORIGIN AND IMPORT OF THE NAME CHRISTIANS.

ACTS xi. 26.—*And the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.*

IT is the glorious prerogative of God to bring good out of evil, and by the powerful superintendence of his providence to overrule the most untoward events, and render them conducive to the ends of his glory and the good of his people.

The persecution which arose upon the death of Stephen affords a striking instance of this; whence the disciples, being all scattered and dispersed, besides the apostles, went everywhere preaching the word: in consequence of which, the neighbouring districts and provinces were much sooner visited with the light of the gospel than they would have been but for that event.

Had the church of Jerusalem continued to enjoy [it] undisturbed in that abundance of spiritual prosperity which attended it, and in the

endearments of the most exalted friendship, they would in all likelihood have been indisposed to separate, and the precious *wheat* would have been accumulated in one spot. By the violence of persecution this happy society was broken up: the disciples found it necessary, according to the direction of their Divine Master, to flee to other cities, where, inflamed with the desire of magnifying Christ and of saving souls, they distributed the precious treasure of the gospel. Thus the clouds which the wind had scattered descended in rich and copious showers to refresh and render fruitful the earth: "And at that time there was a great persecution against the church that was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles; and they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word."*

Among other places where the gospel was planted on this occasion was Antioch, a famous city built on the river Orontes, and the capital of Syria, where the kings of Syria, the successors of Alexander the Great, usually resided. This city must be carefully distinguished from Antioch in Pisidia, mentioned in the thirteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

The instruments chiefly employed in this work appear to have been men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they were come to this city for the first time, spoke to the Greeks (that is, the pagan inhabitants of the city), preaching the Lord Jesus. Much success crowned their labours; or, to speak in the language of the Holy Ghost, "the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord."

This is the first instance we meet with in sacred writ of the gospel being preached to the heathen. Though the apostles and evangelists had received from their Lord a commission for that purpose, it was some time before they fully comprehended its import, or attempted to execute it. By a special direction, Peter had, indeed, previous to this, communicated the gospel to Cornelius and his family; but no general attempt had hitherto been made to propagate Christianity among idolaters.

Until this time, they who were dispersed from Jerusalem, in various parts, preached the gospel to Jews only. The introduction of the gospel into Antioch was therefore distinguished by the remarkable circumstance of its being the first instance in which the apostles' commission was executed to its full extent, and the treasures of divine truth were freely proposed to the acceptance of the gentiles. It was here the light of the word first began to dawn on benighted pagans, and that the heathen began to be "given to Christ for his possession." The happy union of Jews and gentiles in one church, and the breaking down of the middle wall of partition which had for ages divided them from each other, commenced here. That ancient oracle in which it was foretold that "God would enlarge Japheth, and that he should dwell in the tents of Shem,"† then began to receive its accomplishment. Those whom Jesus had made "fishers of men," and who had hitherto

* Acts viii. 1, 4 † Gen. ix. 27.

confined their labours to the scanty rivulets and shallow pools of one people, began now to "launch out into the deep," and to cast their net in the wide ocean.

When tidings of these things came to the ears of the church at Jerusalem, they were far from feeling emotions of envy. The holy apostles were strangers to any uneasy sensation on finding that event accomplished by meaner instruments which they had neglected to attempt. They immediately "sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch; who, when he came and saw the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them, that with purpose of heart they should cleave to the Lord." His character explains his conduct; for "he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith; and much people were added unto the Lord."

Not satisfied with contributing his own exertions to the formation of the work, he called in superior aid: he [went] to "Tarsus, to seek Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch." Thus this church, in addition to other extraordinary circumstances, had the honour of being one of the first scenes in which the great apostle of the gentiles laboured. It was here he began to scatter those celestial sparks which soon after kindled a general conflagration in the world. "And it came to pass that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people." Then follows the circumstance on which we have founded this discourse: "And they were called Christians first at Antioch."

I. As the appellation of "Christian" was unknown till this time, it is natural to inquire by what appellation they were distinguished previously. From the Scriptures it appears there were various names by which the followers of Christ were characterized. Among themselves the most usual denomination was brethren. "And we came the next day to Puteoli, where we found brethren."* "If any man," saith St. Paul, "that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, with such an one no not to eat."† They were styled "believers:" "And believers were the more added to the Lord, both of men and women."‡ They were denominated "disciples:" "There went with us also certain of the disciples of Cæsarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge."§ Their enemies, by way of contempt, styled them Nazarenes; thus Tertullus accuses Paul of being "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes."‖ Of similar import to this was the appellation of Galileans, and the term αἱρεσις, or sect, meaning by that a body of men who had embraced a religion of their own in opposition to that established by the law. And this appellation of Galileans was continued to be employed by the enemies of Christ as a term of reproach as late as the time of Julian, who reigned about the middle of the fourth century, and used it incessantly in his invectives against Christians. The followers of Christ were also styled "men of this way:" "And I persecuted *this way* unto the death."¶

* Acts xxviii. 13, 14. † 1 Cor. v. 11. ‡ Acts v 14.
§ Acts xxi. 16 ‖ Acts xxiv. 5. ¶ Acts xxii. 4.

II. Another question naturally here occurs,—Was this name given by human or divine authority? On this the Scriptures offer no certain information, nor can any thing be affirmed with confidence. It is not at all probable an appellation so inoffensive, and even so honourable, originated with their enemies; they would have invented one that was more opprobrious. But supposing it to have been assumed first by the disciples themselves, we can scarcely suppose they would have ventured to take a step so important as that of assuming an appellation by which the church was to be distinguished in all ages, without divine direction; especially at a time when the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit were so common, and in a church where prophets abounded. For "there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.*" Is it to be supposed that they would assume a new appellation without recourse to the prophets for that direction; or that, supposing it to have had no other than a human origin, it would have been so soon and so unanimously adopted by every part of the Christian church? This opinion receives some countenance from the word here used, which is not in any other instance applied to the giving a name by human authority. In its genuine import, it bears some relation to an oracle.† Names, as they are calculated to give just or false representations of the nature of things, are of considerable importance; so that the affixing one to discriminate the followers of Christ in every period of time seems to have been not unworthy of divine interposition.

III. The next inquiry which arises on this subject respects the propriety and import of this name.

1. Of its propriety no doubt can be entertained. It has always been usual in the schools of philosophy, and in the sects arising out of a difference of opinion in religion, to give to the partisans the name of the founder. Thus the Platonists were so styled from Plato, the Pythagoreans from Pythagoras, the Aristotelians from Aristotle, the Sadduceans from Zadoc. The propriety of the followers of Christ taking their name from him was still more striking. The respective leaders we have mentioned merely communicated their opinions to their followers, and after they quitted the present [state] had no further influence over them; the conviction ceased for ever. It is far otherwise with the disciples of Christ: he is now as much as ever their living head; he lives in them, and they live by him. To them he stands in the same relation as the natural head to the members. It is not a civil, but a vital—not a temporary, but a perpetual and eternal union, which subsists between Christ and his followers. By a sacred and mysterious influence, he imparts his very image to his disciples; and it is surely fit they should receive their name from him from whom they have derived their nature.

* Acts xiii. 1.

† *Benson, Doddridge*, and others, think that the word χρηματίσαι implies that it was done *by a divine direction*. But *Parkhurst* thinks that the passages quoted by Doddridge do not bear him out in his interpretation.—Ed.

In bestowing the appellation of Christians on the disciples of Christ, God may be considered as fulfilling that gracious declaration, "Thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name;"* "The Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name."†

It soon began to prevail to the exclusion of every other. When Peter wrote his first Epistle, it seems to have been in familiar use: "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."‡ St. James styles it "that worthy name;" it is truly a most excellent and honourable appellation: "Do they not blaspheme that worthy name by which ye are called?"§ In the times of persecution, the only question asked of such as were arraigned at the tribunal of the magistrate was, "Are you a Christian?" To answer this in the affirmative was looked upon as in every way to justify the proceeding to the utmost extremities. And in the midst of the sharpest torments, the martyrs found a relief and refreshment in repeating, at each pause of agony, "I am a Christian."

2. The proper import of this name is, a follower of Christ: it denotes one who, from mature deliberation and an unbiassed mind, embraces the religion of Christ, receives his doctrine, believes his promises, and makes it his chief habitual care to shape his life by his precepts and example.

The Christian and the man of the world are diametrically opposite characters; since it is a chief part of our Saviour's design, and the great scope of his religion, to redeem us from the present evil world.

The Christian is one who professes to have attained such a practical knowledge of Christ as enables him to walk even as he walked. The rules by which he lives are the words of Christ; his example is the model after which he copies; the happiness he aspires to is that of being for ever with the Lord.

Here it is too apparent that multitudes assume the name of Christian, to whom it is, in strict propriety, utterly inapplicable. Educated in a country where Christianity is the established religion, they acquiesce in its truth, or perhaps never thought the inquiry, whether it were true or not, of sufficient importance to engage their attention. But to whatever distinguishes the real Christian—his faith, his hope, his charity; to whatever relates to a spiritual union with Christ—faith in his sacrifice, delight in his person, or an animating hope of his appearance, they remain total and contented strangers. They neither have any share in these things, nor are dissatisfied at the consciousness of not possessing them. They feel no scruple in associating the name of Christ with many, perhaps, of the vices, and with all the spirit of the world. This assumption of the name of Christ, without aspiring to the least resemblance to his character, has done incalculable injury to the interest of religion. To this, more than to any other cause, we must ascribe the little progress vital Christianity has made in the world. It is [this] that imboldens the scoffer, encourages the infidel, the profligate, the

* Isa. lxii. 2. † Isa. lxv. 15.
‡ 1 Pet. iv. 16 § James ii. 7.

votaries of paganism, and seals the eyes of the impenitent in every nation in deeper and more death-like slumber: "For the name of God is blasphemed among the gentiles through you, as it is written."* The time is coming when the Lord Jesus will vindicate the honour of that name which wicked men have disgraced. It had been better for them not to have named the name of Christ, than, having named it, not to depart from all evil.

IV. Let me take occasion from these words to urge you to become Christians in reality and truth. The name without the reality will only augment your guilt and aggravate your doom; but the possession of genuine religion will add unspeakably to your happiness both here and hereafter. To be a partaker of Christ is to be at peace with God, —to have peace of conscience, to possess a beneficial interest in all things, and an assured hope of life everlasting. He came that you might have life, and more than life. He came to give rest to your souls, to afford you strong consolation under the sorrows of the world, support in the hour of death, and an entrance, when your mortal course is ended, into the glory to be revealed. He is ready to vanquish your spiritual enemies for you, to cleanse you from all your impurities, purge you from all your guilt, and make you "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." While the bare profession of Christianity will bestow neither profit nor delight, the possession of it in reality will be replete with both, and will afford the "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."† It will deliver you from a thousand snares against which there is no other relief; emancipate you from the bondage of a multitude of degrading passions, and invest you with the "glorious liberty of the children of God." However lightly you may esteem it now, be assured that the moment is coming when to belong to Christ, to be in union with him, will be felt to be a greater happiness than to be master of the world. Every other honour will fade; every other distinction will pass away; every other enjoyment be exhausted; while the crown of righteousness which Christ will give to his sincere followers will shine with undecaying brightness through the ages of eternity. Let the young be persuaded it will add unspeakable grace to the charms of youth; temper its vivacity with wisdom, tincture its passions with innocence, and form it for a happy, useful, and honourable life. It will be an ornament to youth, a safe directory in the active pursuits of life, a staff and a consolation amid the decays and infirmities of age. To see you set out in the ways of Christ will afford the highest satisfaction to the church of God; the most exalted pleasure to your parents, who watch every movement of your mind with parental solicitude, ready to rejoice over you with transport when they can say of any of you, as it was said of Saul, "Behold, he prayeth."

V. We cannot but look back with regret to the period when the followers of Christ were known by no other name. Happy period, when, instead of being rent into a thousand parts, and split into innumerable divisions, the church of Christ was "one fold under one

* Rom. ii. 24. † 1 Tim. iv. 8.

Shepherd!" The seamless coat of the Redeemer was of one entire piece from the top to the bottom. The world was divided into two grand parties—Christians and pagans. This happy state, we have no doubt, will occur again: "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord."*

In consequence of a more copious communication of the Spirit, some of our differences of opinion will be removed, and "the shepherds will see eye to eye," and others of them will be lost in the indulgence of Christian charity, in the noble oblivion of love.

In the mean time, if party names must subsist, let us carefully watch against a party spirit; let us direct our chief attention to what constitutes a Christian, and learn to prize most highly those great truths in which all good men are agreed. In a settled persuasion that what is disputed or obscure in the system of Christianity is, in that proportion, of little importance, compared to those fundamental truths which are inscribed on the page of revelation as with a sunbeam; whenever we see a Christian, let us esteem, let us love him; and though he be weak in faith, receive him, "not to doubtful disputation."

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## XXXVI.

### ON LOVE OF THE BRETHREN, AS A CRITERION OF A STATE OF SALVATION.

1 John iii. 14.—*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.*

As it is an inquiry of the highest moment whether we are in a state of acceptance with God or under condemnation, we ought carefully to attend to the marks and criterions by which these two opposite states are distinguished in the word of God. The Scripture abounds with directions on this subject; so that if we remain in an habitual state of suspense and uncertainty, it is not to be ascribed to deficiency of light in the sacred oracles, but must be imputed, for the most part at least, to the want of strict and impartial inquiry. Too many professors of Christianity content themselves without attaining a satisfactory evidence of their real character in the sight of God; hoping all is well, without resting on sure and solid grounds: by which, if their religion is really vain, they incur the charge of presumption; and if it is genuine, deprive themselves of the richest source of comfort, as well as of motives to the most ardent gratitude. For how is it possible to praise God for a favour which we are not certain we have received? Or if a

* Isa. xl. 6, 8, 9.

feeble hope is entitled to devout acknowledgment, our praises mus' be faint and languid in proportion to the mixture of darkness and un certainty which attends it. We are exhorted to give all diligence, that we may obtain the full assurance of hope: we should never read in the writings of this eminent apostle the rapturous exclamation, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God,"* had he been in that state of suspense respecting his prospects for eternity in which too many Christians allow themselves to remain.

With a view to assist the professors of the gospel in their attempts to ascertain their real condition, we request your serious attention while we endeavour to explain and illustrate the criterion of character the apostle suggests in the text: "Hereby we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

Death and life are the two extremes set before us,—spiritual death and spiritual life; for in this sense, it is obvious, the words must be understood. When the apostle speaks of our *passing* from death unto life, the phraseology necessarily implies that death is our natural state as sinners; and, consequently, that he who is perfectly conscious of his having experienced no change is under no necessity of inquiring further: he infallibly abideth in death. "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."† A transition from one state to another is supposed in every case where there is a well-founded hope of salvation; and the design of the apostle in the words before us is to suggest an infallible criterion of the reality of such a transition.

When he speaks of love to the brethren, we must understand him to mean love to real Christians, who are frequently, in the New Testament, distinguished by this appellation: "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."‡ In reproving the Corinthians for their contentious spirit, St. Paul used this language: "Brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren."§ In this passage, it is manifest that the term brethren is equivalent to Christian, and that it is employed in contradistinction to unbelievers. When the apostle lays down love to real Christians as an infallible sign and token of a justified state, he cannot be supposed to include every sort of attachment which may be felt towards them, from whatever principles or on whatever occasion it arises. No doubt can be entertained that there are circumstances in which the genuine disciples of Christ may be objects of love, without its furnishing the least evidence of a religious character. Religion may have no sort of concern in it. Parents may love their children, children their parents, husbands their wives, and wives their husbands, whatever be the religious character of the party beloved, upon principles merely natural. The natural affections and desires, by which society is cemented, and

* 1 John iii. 1. † 1 John iii. 14. ‡ 1 John iii. 16. § 1 Cor. vi. 6–8.

mankind are bound to each other, can afford, it is evident, no test or criterion of religious principle.

True Christians may possess certain qualities which, according to the principles of human nature, are calculated to command a portion of esteem and affection; such as prudence, generosity, kindness, and fidelity: to which nothing but a brutish insensibility can render men entirely [indifferent.] There are certain social and moral virtues which are so useful to the world, and so attractive in themselves, as to be the natural objects of partiality; and these Christianity will improve, rather than impair. We may proceed a step further, and add, that a Christian may be even indebted to his religion for certain qualities which excite attachment, and yet that attachment shall afford no proof of the religious character of him who feels it: "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness."* This goodness, this genuine benevolence of Christian deportment, has its charms; and, on a variety of occasions, may excite esteem in persons who have no regard to the principle from whence it flows. "Demetrius had good report of all men, and of the truth itself."† When St. Paul had been inculcating certain Christian graces, he adds, he that hath these things "is acceptable to God and approved of men."‡ If we find ourselves overpowered, as it were, and captivated by the display of Christian virtue, we are not hence entitled immediately to draw a favourable conclusion respecting our state, without looking deeper, and inquiring how we stand affected towards the *principle* whence these virtues emanated.

This leads us to observe, that it is the ground on which our attachment to a Christian is founded that can alone afford a favourable decision in this matter. Do we love the brethren *as* brethren, Christians *as* Christians, on account of the relation they bear to their heavenly Father, and on account of their union to Christ? In any specific case, when we feel warmly attached to a Christian, is it founded on this consideration, that he is a Christian, a follower of the holy and immaculate Lamb of God? If we can answer this question in the affirmative, St. John authorizes us in our deeming it an infallible evidence of our having passed from death unto life. It affords such an evidence in two ways:—

I. Negatively, it proves that we are not of the world.

II. Positively, it demonstrates that we are of God.

I. It proves that we are not of the world: for the world is entirely destitute of an attachment to the disciples of Christ, as such. At no period did the world appear favourably disposed to the disciples of Christ as such, or on account of their relation to this their divine Head. Our Lord repeatedly warned his followers to expect just the contrary: "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake."§ "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."‖ "I have given them my word; and the world

* Eph. v. 9. † 3 John 12. ‡ Rom. xiv. 18
§ Matt. x. 22. ‖ John xv. 19.

hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."*

The course of events from that to the present time has verified the truth of the Saviour's declaration,—"They were hated of all men for his name's sake;" they were "persecuted from city to city,"† and even the most eminent among them accounted as "the offscouring of all things."‡ In every subsequent age, and in every country, the true disciples of Christ have encountered opposition, which has been almost invariably more or less violent in proportion to their attachment to the Saviour, to the purity of their faith, and the lustre of their piety. Look at the world at present; view it in this highly favoured nation, furnished as it is with wholesome laws, and restrained from open persecution: do you perceive the world to evince a predilection for the serious and earnest followers of Christ? Is decided Christian piety, conspicuous in the character of any, a passport to distinction and favour? On the contrary, will a man be better received in worldly circles for being supposed to resemble Christ? No. We can be at no loss to answer these questions, or avoid perceiving that the world continues invariably consistent with itself in "loving its own,"§ and none but its own. If in any instance its affections stray beyond its own circle, if in any instance it extends its favourable regards to a real Christian, it is never on account of his being a Christian,—it is never, as St. John expresses it, "for the truth's sake, which dwelleth in him."‖ Since this is an unquestionable fact, that the world is thus unfavourably disposed towards serious Christians; if it be otherwise with us, it proves that we are "not of the world;"¶ or, in other words, that we have "passed from death unto life."

II. The love of the brethren, as such, affords a positive proof of our being of God.

This will appear in a clearer light if we consider the grounds on which love to Christians proceeds:—

1. To love Christians, *as such*, is to love them on account of their relation to God and the Redeemer.

2. On account of their attachment to both.

3. On account of the resemblance which they bear to these divine Persons.

1. He who loves Christians as such is attached to them on account of their relation to God. The Supreme Being stands in a peculiar relation to Christians, as their God: He is their "covenant God and Father through Christ Jesus." They are, emphatically, a peculiar treasure to him above all the nations of the earth. They are his possessions, his inheritance, his people. In every age there have been a people in whom the blessed God claimed a peculiar interest, on whom he fixed his special love, and manifested himself unto them, as he does not to the world; a people who were "the temple of God,"** the seat of his special presence, among whom he walked and dwelt. Under the Christian dispensation true Christians compose this people. In

* John xvii. 14. † Matt. xxiii. 34. ‡ 1 Cor. iv. 13. § John xv. 19
‖ 2 John 2. ¶ John xv. 19 ** 1 Cor. iii 16.

whatever interesting and endearing relation God stood to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, he stands in that same relation to the sincere followers of Christ. They are the objects of that special love of which the Saviour speaks in these words: "For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God."* To feel attached to Christians on this account is a proof of a heart well affected towards the Supreme Being, reconciled to his requirements and government: and as "the carnal mind is enmity against God,"† it affords an evidence that this enmity is [illegible]. If we feel favourably towards the domestics of a family on account of their relation to their master, it is an evidence of affection to the master himself; it is a fruit of it. The relation which Christians bear to the Redeemer is still more intimate and endearing: they are the people that were given him to redeem before the world [began;] they are the children for whose sake he took flesh and blood; they are his pupils, his household, and family; nay, more, his spiritual spouse and the members of his mystical body. The love of the brethren contemplates them in that light, and consequently evinces a heart well affected towards their Lord and head. To give "a cup of water in the name of a disciple"‡ shall not lose its reward.

2. On account of their attachment to God, and their zeal for the interest of his glory. This is so essential a part of the Christian character that it cannot be separated from the grounds and reasons of a rational regard for Christians, unless we are supposed to be ruled by a blind and unthinking impulse. Our esteem for good men will be intimately blended with the consideration of their being on God's side. While the rest of the world continue in a state of enmity and alienation, we must look upon these as reconciled, as persons who have given a cordial and respectful reception to his ambassadors, and have renewed their alliance, or rather made their submission, upon the gracious terms he was pleased to propose. "You, that were enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death."§ And being reconciled, they are employed to manage his interests, to maintain his honour, and to propagate as far as possible the sentiments of loyal obedience by which they themselves are actuated. These views enter deeply into the Christian character and calling. How can we give a more unequivocal evidence of a loyal and affectionate disposition towards the prince than by abetting his, in opposition to the disaffected, party? As the case will not admit of neutrality—as he, in such a situation, who is not *for* the prince is necessarily looked upon as a rebel, so a cordial attachment to his interests cannot be more decisively expressed than by a determined [adherence] to those who cheerfully submit to his authority, and delight in his government. "He that knoweth God heareth us."‖

3. True Christians are distinguished by some peculiar traits of resemblance to God and the Redeemer; and this enters into the grounds of that regard for them which the apostle speaks of in the text. They

* John xvi. 27. † Rom. viii. 7. ‡ Matt. x. 42.
§ Coloss. i. 21, 22. ‖ 1 John iv. 6.

ture, but are in some degree partakers of
ass the glory of the Lord, but are changed
ry to glory."* Their character makes a
ut yet a real, approach to the absolute
h they [constantly] study and imitate,
fore him unblameable in holiness. In
the paternal image are impressed; and
re than natural affection it becomes them to
such a parent, they become "followers of God, as dear children."† If they profess to have fellowship with God, they evince that profession to be no empty boast, by walking in the light as he who is in the light. If they profess to know Christ, to have a sacred intimacy with him, they justify the pretension in some good degree by walking as he also walked, by doing righteousness as he also did.

To feel an attachment to Christians on this account is an unequivocal proof of a love of rectitude, a love of God, an attachment to those great moral properties in which the true beauty of the Divine character consists.

Close with three remarks.

I. The criterion supplied in the text may be inverted. If we do *not* love Christ, other love will discover itself by the choice of our society.

II. It is not only a safe, but a useful criterion suggested in the text, which may be applied to great advantage. We may see the sun through the water when we cannot look upon it in its place in the heavens.

III. It should be our care to improve in this part of the Christian character, to abound therein more and more.

Love is the characteristic of the Christian.

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## XXXVII.

### ON THE DUTY OF INTERCESSION.

1 Tim. ii. 1.—*I exhort, therefore, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men.*

I. Duty.

1. The reasons and obligations of prayer arise out of the fundamental principles of religion—the belief that there is a God, and that he is "the rewarder of such as diligently seek him." The duty of intercession, or praying for others, springs from the relation we stand in to our fellow-creatures. As the former is an essential part of piety, so the latter is a branch of benevolence, not less essential. To love our neighbour as ourselves is the fulfilment of the second table of the law. Unless we believe in the efficacy of prayer we have no pretensions to the

* 2 Cor. iii. 18. † Ephes. v. 1.

character of Christians; but if we are convinced that the prayer of the righteous avails, we have no right to withhold from those we ourselves are bound to love this advantage, especially as it is a benefit which it is always in our power to confer without loss or detriment to ourselves. In almost every other instance, the favour we confer seems at least to come into competition with the claims of self-interest; but in this there is no possible interference or intrusion.

Here only are we able fitly to imitate the Supreme Being, who imparts to all without diminishing his own store. The duty of intercession is also recommended and enforced by this important consideration, that it opens a channel in which the benevolence of every individual may flow. To afford pecuniary relief is the privilege of the rich; to guide the councils of a nation, of the wise; to ensure victory by arms, of the powerful: but the most obscure person may intercede, and by this means promote the welfare of millions, and affect the destiny of nations.

2. That we are [led] to infer this duty from the general principles of reason and religion. It is implied in the social form of the prayer taught by our Lord, where we are commanded to address God as *our* Father. It is expressly enjoined by apostolic authority, in the passage now under consideration. It is also a duty exemplified by the practice of the most eminent saints. Abraham interceded for Sodom, Job for his friends, Moses for the people of Israel, Samuel for Saul, &c. Intercession formed a principal branch of the priestly function of the law. Our great High-priest spent some of the most precious moments near the end of his earthly course in interceding with his Father, not only on behalf of his disciples, but of all who should "afterward believe on his name."

The apostle assures us, it is by virtue of his continued intercession in heaven that he is "able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him;" so that in his hands it is the refuge of the guilty, the hope of the perishing, a mysterious chain fastened to the throne of God, the stay and support of a sinking world.

II. The benefits of intercession; which may be considered in two lights,—as they respect ourselves, and as they regard others.

1. As they respect ourselves.

(1.) It will have a happy tendency to increase our benevolence. As the love of God and of man make up the whole of religion, so there is nothing more likely to promote the love of our fellow-creatures than the bearing them in our minds before the throne of Grace. How can we fail to feel concern for the happiness of those for whom we pray?

Either our petitions must be full of hypocrisy, or our good wishes to them must be hearty and sincere. To pray for their welfare, and yet be indifferent, would constitute the grossest dissimulation. In venturing to address the Supreme Being in their behalf, we assume the character of advocates. To be indifferent to their welfare is to belie the character and betray our trust. That criminal self-love which is the great reproach of our nature is grown to such a height principally in consequence of our habitual inattention to the situation of others.

We contemplate ourselves and our own circumstances, till we almost forget there are any other beings in the world. When we can be prevailed upon to step out of this narrow circle, and look at the distresses and anxieties which those around us have to encounter, a generous compassion is excited, the tenderness of nature is touched, and our own troubles appear light and inconsiderable. Most of our vices, my brethren, may be traced to a want of reflection. And what is the best remedy for this thoughtlessness and vanity, as far as it respects our duty to others? Intercession.

In solemn intercession with God the misery, the helplessness, and dependence of our fellow-mortals, or rather of our fellow-immortals, rise in view with all their affecting peculiarities; at those moments, when the mind is the most calm, tender, and elevated—at those moments when none but God can enter—when we feel our own nothingness before Him who is all in all. When we have been "spreading before the Lord" the circumstances of an orphan who has no friend, of a widow who has no protector, of an unhappy man who is under the dominion of lusts which are hurrying him fast to eternal destruction; is it possible to rise from our knees without feeling sentiments the most noble, tender, and disinterested; without feeling in some measure what Paul felt when he said, "Who is weak and I am not weak; who is offended and I burn not?"

Is it possible to return immediately into ourselves, and to behave with unfeeling insolence, as though the world were made for us; instead of remembering that we are a small part of an immense whole, an inconsiderable member of a vast family?

As we are concerned to employ prayer and intercession for all men, that narrowness of mind which confines our solicitude to a small circle instead of all within our reach, universal good or ill, will be the most effectually promoted or remedied.

If we comply in any tolerable measure with this apostolic injunction, by offering solemn prayer for the happiness of the world and the prosperity of the church, for the conversion of the heathen and the salvation of the whole earth, in proportion as our thoughts diffuse themselves, our hearts will necessarily become enlarged.

(2.) It will be the best antidote against all angry and malignant passions.

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We may consider the benefit of intercession as it respects others. There is a remarkable passage in Ezekiel xiv. 14: "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God."

From this passage we may infer two things:—First, that there are seasons when even the intercession of the most eminent will not avail seasons in which it is unalterably determined to inflict punishment. Secondly, we may infer that these are so rare and so extraordinary, that to declare he will not turn away for intercession is the strongest token of his fierce indignation.

(1.) If God delights to hear prayer, it is most reasonable to believe

he will favourably regard intercessory prayer; for then the supplicant is exercising two most important virtues at once,—piety and benevolence. He is then employed in fulfilling the whole law, and makes the nearest approach to the Divine nature.

(2.) Examples of its success;—Abraham, Moses, and Job.

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III. General objects of intercession.

1. Our civil governors. We are under the strongest obligations to this, on account of the inestimable benefits involved in good government, which, like the natural health of the body, is indispensably necessary to our happiness, yet is scarcely perceived till it be interrupted. We of this country are under peculiar obligations to this duty.

2. The church, "the mother of us all," from whom we are born, at whose breasts we have been nourished with the "sincere milk of the word." "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name."* Let us pray for its extension, for its peace, for its purity, for the accomplishment of all the promises made to it.

3. The distressed of every description have peculiar claims to our prayers. Indigent Christians, who ever appear to be in a peculiar manner the objects of compassion, will share in our petitions to a throne of Grace. To pray for others is the best salve and relief of powerless benevolence. For where can we turn our eyes without seeing persons misled by error and delusion which we wish in vain to arrest, made wretched by vices which we cannot reform, or oppressed with misery it is out of our power to avert? Must it not, in such circumstances, furnish the greatest incitement to go into the presence of that Being to whom it is infinite mercy to heal the maladies of mind and body, and to do "for us, and for all men, above all we can ask or think?" When we have thus commended the case of our distressed fellow-creatures to the Divine notice—when we have thus committed them, as it were, into the arms of our heavenly Father—we feel calm: our compassion grows softer, while it loses its anxiety, and our benevolence, like his, becomes strong and glowing, without solicitude.

4. Our friends and relatives.

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Application.

* Isaiah lxii. 1, 2.

# XXXVIII.

## GOD'S ETERNITY CONSIDERED, IN REFERENCE TO THE SUSPENSION OF HIS PROMISED PURPOSES.

2 PET iii. 8.—*But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.**

THAT spirit of prophecy with which the holy apostles were endowed enabled them to foretel the principal defections from the Christian faith which should distinguish the last days,—the papal superstition and infidel impiety.

We have long witnessed the fulfilment of both these predictions: the gross idolatry, cruel edicts, and tyrannical claims of the Church of Rome have been for ages promulgated; and now that superstition appears to be in its dotage, and falling fast into decay, a new progeny has arisen—a scoffing, infidel spirit.

They founded their disbelief of Christ's coming to destroy the world, to judge the wicked, and to reward his servants, on the pretended uniformity of the course of nature. No event which bears any resemblance to that which the gospel foretels, they pretend, has ever taken place. In affirming this, the apostle charges them with "wilful ignorance" [of the destruction of the world by water.]

He then proceeds to declare that the heavens, which at present subsist, are reserved for a similar catastrophe, and are doomed to undergo a more signal overthrow. Nor can any argument be deduced against the certain accomplishment of the divine declarations, from the seeming length of the time during which their execution is delayed: since "one day is with God as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

In attempting to improve these words, we shall,

I. Endeavour to illustrate their import, and establish the truth of the proposition which they contain.

II. Show to what particular uses the truth which they exhibit may be applied.

I. Let us attempt to illustrate the assertion, "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

It is necessary, in order to enter into the sense and meaning of the apostle in these words, to consider on what occasion they were introduced.

They are designed as an answer to the objections which irreligious scoffers advance against the certainty of the accomplishment of the divine declarations, founded on its long delay. Impatient and short-sighted mortals are apt to suppose that what is delayed long will never

*Preached at Leicester, Sunday, January 6th, 1811; the first Sunday in the new year.

take place; that an evil which has been long apprehended, but through a series of ages has never actually taken place, need be dreaded no more, but may be safely classed among the phantoms of a vain terror.

In reply to this, the apostle states that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years;" and that long and short, when applied to a part of duration, are not the same in his apprehension as ours: that what appears a long time to us does not appear so to him, whose estimate is so different, and whose views are so much more extended. A thousand years seem to us a very long period, but in his eyes appear extremely short; they are but as a day.

This idea of the different apprehension which God has of time from what we possess, is exhibited in several passages of Scripture: "A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night."* To the same purpose spake the royal Psalmist, in the 39th Psalm: "Make me know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee."†

1. Every portion of duration is something real, and has a true and proper existence; but the epithets great and small, when applied to this (as well as to any thing else), are merely comparative. They necessarily imply a comparison of one quantity with another, without which they can never be applied with justice; for what is great compared with one quantity becomes, at the same moment, little when compared with another, and *vice versâ*.

Thus, fourscore years are at present considered as a great age; but would not have been called so before the [general deluge]. That age is now styled great with propriety, because it is so compared with the usual term of life, which is considerably less; and, for an opposite reason, it would before the flood have been styled small, because it would have been so compared with the average term of human life at that period, which was much greater. We should consider fifty years as forming a very large portion of human life; but the same number of years in the history of an empire would be justly considered small. Thus is the same quantity either great or small as you place it by the side of something much inferior to it in magnitude, or much superior.

2. Hence it results that absolute greatness belongs only to what is infinite; for whatever falls short of this, however great it may appear, its supposed greatness is entirely owing to the incidental absence of another object that is greater. It may be, it will be, infallibly reduced to insignificance, the moment it comes into comparison with that which is so prodigiously superior to it.

3. In duration, absolute greatness belongs only to eternity. The epithet great, or whatever other is most expressive of the profoundest astonishment, is, with the utmost propriety, applied to that unfathomable abyss. Incapable of being placed in any light, or brought, even by imagination, into any comparison which should reduce it to insignifi-

* Psalm xc. 4. † Psalm xxxix. 4, 5.

cance, it asserts its pre-eminence, and vindicates its majesty, in all places and [times], in all the possible varieties of being, or combinations of thought.

4. We must then conceive that He who has subsisted throughout eternal ages; who knows no "beginning of days, nor end of years;" who possesses eternity; to whom all its parts (if we may be allowed so to speak) are continually open, both past and future; must have a very different apprehension of that inconsiderable portion of it we call time, from creatures who are acquainted with no other. His apprehension, we may easily conceive, will be, in this respect, very different; and that what to us appears a large portion will in his eyes appear very inconsiderable.

Nor let any one here object, and say it must appear as it is, and, therefore there is no reason to suppose it appears to him different from what it does to us. No doubt it appears to him exactly as it is. His apprehensions are, unquestionably, agreeable to the nature of things; but it does not follow from thence that it must appear in the same light as it does to us: and if there may be a difference, it is surely the highest presumption to make ourselves the standard.

That each portion of duration appears to him real we admit; we are not contending for its being annihilated in his view. Something it is, and something it appears, unquestionably, in his eyes, who views things as they are; but this is far from proving that a limited portion of duration must appear to him of the same precise magnitude as it does in our eyes.

We know, by experience, how susceptible we are of a diversity of apprehension in this respect; and that at some periods, and in some situations, the same portion of time appears much longer than at others. In circumstances of extreme misery, the moments seem to linger, and the lapse of time is slow. How long would a few minutes appear passed in excruciating torment! In a season of anxious expectation, which has a portion of misery in it, the same effect is experienced in a lower degree. On the contrary, in a state of enjoyment the hours seem to take wings, and we are but little sensible of the progress of time. When the mind is fully engaged on a delightful subject, when the attention is deeply absorbed in a pleasing train of reflection, we become scarcely conscious that any space of time has elapsed. We must infer from hence that perfect happiness diminishes inconceivably the impression of time; as, on the contrary, intense misery increases it.

Among all the conceptions we form of the Supreme Being, there is none the propriety of which we can less doubt than of his perfect happiness; nor have any who have believed on him failed to ascribe to him this perfection in the highest possible degree. He is styled in Scripture "the blessed and only Potentate," the happy God: and as he is the fountain of all happiness to his creatures, it resides in him as in its utmost plenitude—as in its proper seat. If his gracious presence is such a perpetual spring of felicity; if it is at "his right-hand there are pleasures for evermore;" how much must he enjoy every moment in the contemplation of his perfections, in the survey of his

works and designs, and in the possession of his consciousness of his supreme dominion and transcendent excellence, his unutterable and unbounded felicity!

Conceive, then, of a Being absolutely independent, and existing from eternity; in the enjoyment of infinite happiness, always master of his purpose, never perplexed with difficulty, never agitated with anxious expectation, resting on his own all-sufficiency, and viewing with complacency each attribute of his infinite fulness. What, then, is an age in his view, compared to what it is in the eyes of mortals? Surely with such a Being "one day *must* be as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

Admiration is in most instances the offspring of ignorance; at least it implies a limitation of the views: so that an object shall appear great in the contemplation of one man, which, to another of more elevated and capacious powers, shall appear small and inconsiderable. But, to an infinite understanding, nothing can appear great that does not partake of its own infinity. The Supreme Mind, and that alone, grasps eternity, possesses it every moment. He not only comprehends, but constitutes, eternal duration, by enduring "from everlasting to everlasting;" for there could be no eternal duration if something did not always endure: we cannot conceive of its existence but as a mode of being, and that being is God.

The measure by which he estimates time is, consequently, quite different from that which we are compelled to apply in its contemplation. We measure one portion of duration by another; he measures time by eternity. How inconceivably different must be the apprehension arising from these different methods of considering it! In attempting to form a conception of endless duration, we are under the necessity of accumulating ages upon ages, and multiplying millions of ages into millions; accompanied with this conviction, that we have arrived no nearer to an adequate comprehension of it; that there remains beyond us an infinitely larger space than we have travelled over. To his view it is every moment present: to him it is familiar, as his element, his habitation; and from that stupendous elevation he looks down upon the scenes of time and the lapse of ages. These reflections may assist us to conceive how to him one day must necessarily be as "a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day"

II. The use to which the doctrine of the text may be applied.

1. It removes the ground of objection against the fulfilment of the divine declarations arising from the accomplishment being long delayed.

If some time is to be allotted for preparation, some space for operation, it surely belongs to God to determine of what extent it should be; this, perhaps, you will admit. But why so long a space? But in whose eyes is it long? In yours, who are but the creatures of a day, who are, from the narrowness of your views, liable to perpetual illusions and deception? or in God's? And, amid this diversity of apprehension, can you hesitate in deciding which is correct?

No slackness in his purpose is then to be imputed to him, according

to what men account slackness; no unsteadiness in his resolution, no revolution of his determination.

Nothing is to be concluded in favour of the impunity of prosperous vice, nor of the final neglect of oppressed and afflicted piety. The prosperity of the wicked is but for a moment: "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading like a green bay-tree: yet I passed by, and he was not; yea, I sought him out, but he could not be found."

2. It accounts for the peculiar cast of Scripture language when employed in announcing the coming of Christ, and the end of all things.

3. Though we cannot immediately change our senses, let us endeavour to conform our ideas and convictions to the dictates of Infallible Wisdom on this subject. Let us consider the whole duration of things here as very short.

The more we drink into the spirit of the Scriptures, the more will this be the case.

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## XXXIX.

### THE LORD'S-DAY COMMEMORATIVE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

PSALM cxviii. 24.—*This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.*

THIS Psalm appears to have been composed on David's accession to the dominion over all Israel; when he had subdued his enemies around, and completely established himself as a great and victorious prince. It was probably set to music on the anniversary of David's coronation. That was a most joyful event. As a very important passage in [this Psalm] is applied to Christ, both by himself and his apostles, no doubt can be entertained of its referring, in its fullest and sublimest sense, to the person and kingdom of the Redeemer. In this light I shall consider it in the following discourse: and as the Lord's-day is appointed to commemorate the resurrection of our Saviour, at which his kingdom commenced, I shall endeavour to invite your attention to those sources of religious joy which are opened by that event. The event which this day is designed to celebrate is calculated to afford joy on the following accounts:—

I. On this day the purchase of our redemption was completed.

In order to render the salvation of sinners consistent with the holiness and justice of the Divine nature, some great moral expedient became necessary. The expedient which the Divine Wisdom adopted was the substitution of the Son of God in the room of sinners; who freely consented to assume our nature, and to sustain those sufferings which

the Father deemed requisite for the satisfaction of his own justice, and especially the suffering of death. Though the merit of his obedience is more eminently ascribed in Scripture to his death ('He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"), yet we are justified in considering all the humiliation he endured during his abode on earth as forming a part of his merit, and consequently of the price of our redemption. His voluntary condescension in coming into our world, his assuming our nature itself, with all its infirmities and sorrows, formed an important part of his merit, because he was under no previous obligation to do it.

His merit, as far as it was the result of his sufferings, was composed of three parts:—

1. His assumption of human nature itself; which, as he was under no previous obligation of doing, was in the highest degree meritorious.

2. The endurance of evils which were not necessarily included in it; such as poverty, contempt, and innumerable privations.

3. [His] death; the efficacy of which was specific, resulting not merely from it as suffering, but as that precise species of suffering which the law inflicted on disobedience: "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die." "The wages of sin is death." The pain of death terminated when he cried, "It is finished!" but the humiliation still remained until his resurrection.

Justice is now satisfied, the law is magnified and made honourable The majesty of heaven and earth appear in the person of the Saviour, with an inviting benignity dressed in smiles, proclaiming peace from the cross "to them that are nigh, and to them that are far off."

II. On this day the character of Christ was illustriously vindicated, and his pretensions fully asserted and sustained. During his life he laboured under the accusation of deceiving the people; his miraculous works were imputed to diabolical agency, and death [was] inflicted on him under the character of a blasphemer, because he affirmed himself to be the Son of God: he was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."* "Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I do these things."†

The grand proof of Christ's messiahship is his resurrection.

To witness his resurrection was the principal office of the apostles: "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, until that same day that he was taken up, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection."‡ It was the evidence to which he had himself appealed: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again."§ It was such an attestation of divine approbation as was never conferred before or since.

III. This day afforded to Christ a signal triumph over his enemies. During his abode in the grave, his enemies exulted, the world rejoiced, his disciples were rejected and dispersed. Witness the desponding

* Rom. i. 4. † John viii. 28. ‡ Acts i. 21, 22. § John ii. 19.

language of his disciples on their way to Emmaus: "We thought it had been he that should have redeemed Israel; and, besides all this, it is the third day since these things were done." The hopes of the church were sunk to the lowest point of depression: it seemed as if the name of Jesus and his cause were for ever entombed in his grave. But how gloriously was the scene reversed by his resurrection! The person of the Saviour was for ever removed beyond the reach of further assault, and his cause was more than ever triumphant: "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all."* Greater miracles were wrought by the apostles in his name than any which he wrought himself. From thence we must date the extensive and successful propagation of the gospel. The Spirit descended, and the eleven apostles were sent forth into all the world. He then began to assume the sceptre of universal dominion, to sit upon the throne of David, to rule and to establish it for ever and ever. "All power was given unto him in heaven and in earth."

IV. On this day our Lord gained an everlasting victory over the last enemy, and triumphed over death in that nature which had always been subject to its dominion before. Death had reigned, not only from Adam to Moses, but through all subsequent generations, subjecting the whole race, and trampling them with indignity in the dust. Millions and millions had descended into his dreary prison, of which none had ever been able to break the bars, and escape from the confinement. The king of terrors maintained an undisputed dominion, a despotic away, over all the past generations of mankind. Some were indulged with a larger respite than others. Some descended into his mansions with more funereal pomp and pageantry; but when arrived there, they all met with the same reception: the same darkness enveloped them; and they equally said "to corruption, Thou art my sister; to the worm, Thou art my mother." But on this day a new order of things commenced. Death for the first time encountered an enemy more powerful than himself; and though he seemed to prevail for a moment, he was for ever foiled in the conflict. He received into his territory, in the guise of a captive, Him whom he found a conqueror. [Christ] exhibited the first specimen of immortal man: not that shadow of immortality consisting in being remembered and celebrated for ages by creatures who are hastening to the tomb; but an immortality consisting in a form which is imperishable,—a glorious being, over which death hath no more power, which will subsist in undecaying youth and splendour when the heavens are no more. This is the pattern and example to which the children of the resurrection will be conformed.

V. On this day we are called to rejoice in that sure and certain prospect which the resurrection of Christ affords to all true believers, of ascending with him to heaven, and of there partaking with him of his glory. As he was the substituted representative of true believers, what was accomplished in him at his resurrection will ere long be accomplished in them: the victory over death which he acquired he

* Acts iv. 33.

will impart to them; the glory which he has received he will give to them; the eternal rest into which he has entered at his ascension he hath prepared for them:—"Every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; then they that are Christ's at his coming." In nothing that our Saviour suffered or obtained is he to be considered in the light of a private character. Nothing was suffered on his own account, or effected merely with a view to his own benefit. "As he bore our sins in his own body on the tree," and "died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God," the rewards which he merited, the dignity to which he was exalted, are not confined to his own person, but accrue to every part of his mystical body.

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## XL.

### CHRIST'S CARE OVER CHURCHES AND MINISTERS.

**Rev. ii. 1.**—*These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.*

As Jesus Christ is the "true light" of the world, so a principal means by which he dispenses his illumination is by the appointment of a stated ministry, and the formation of Christian churches. By concentrating and uniting their efforts,—by collecting their information, their zeal, and piety into a [point,] they dispel much of the darkness of the present state. This state is frequently in Scripture compared to night: "The night is far spent; the day is at hand."* During the prevalence of this darkness, previous to the rising of the "Sun of righteousness," he has placed his ministers as stars in the firmament, and appointed his churches to be as lamps or candlesticks.

By the representation of the text, we are strongly reminded of the sole end and design for which ministers are constituted and churches formed: it is to dispense spiritual illumination to a benighted world; it is that they may shine with knowledge and holiness. As far as they answer this purpose they are useful and important; in proportion as they lose sight of it they forfeit every just claim to esteem, and sink into insignificance and contempt. It is their duty to "hold forth the word of life."† The light they are appointed to dispense is the pure doctrine of Christ, exhibited by an open profession, and sustained and recommended by the virtues of a holy life. When churches depart from the essential truths of Christianity, they become incapable of answering the end of their institution. They are no longer useful lights, but delusive meteors; which, instead of guiding souls to heaven, mislead and betray them to destruction.

False teachers are compared by Jude to "wandering stars,"‡ in

* Rom. xiii. 12. † Philip. ii. 16. ‡ Jude 13.

opposition to those mentioned in the text, who are supposed to continue in their station, and afford a regular and steady light. In representing Christ's ministers under the metaphor of stars, it is not improbable there may be an allusion to Daniel: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."*

The appellation of "the bright and morning star" is assumed by our Saviour himself; and as ministers, though at an immeasurable distance, are yet nearest him in the official rank in the church, so ought they most to resemble him in the distinguishing features in the Christian character. The church is represented as having on her head "a crown of twelve stars,"† which denote the twelve apostles. John saw seven of these stars and lamps: which may either refer to the precise number of the churches to whom Christ sends distinct epistles; or, as seems more likely, the number is adopted as a mystical number, agreeable to the arrangement of this book, which consists of seven seals, seven trumpets, seven vials, and contains a distinct [intimation] of the seven spirits that are before the throne. There is contained an allusion to the golden candlestick in the temple, which consisted of seven branches. "The eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth."‡

Let us proceed to consider,—

I. What is meant by our Lord's holding the stars, his ministers, in his hand.

His holding the stars in his hand implies the appointing them to the work of the ministry. His qualifying them for the successful discharge of it, and his absolute [disposal and direction] of them and all their concerns.

1. It implies that it is he who appoints them to their office. From him, as the sole Head of the church, they derive their commissions. They are his servants and messengers. He sometimes describes them by appellations peculiar to the Jewish church; as when he tells the Jews, "Behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes:"§—but more frequently by titles peculiar to the New Testament. "When he ascended up on high, he gave some, apostles; some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers."‖ Hence St. Paul gives thanks to Jesus Christ, who had enabled him, "for that he counted him faithful, putting him into the ministry."¶

2. It is he who imparts the qualifications which are necessary for the effectual discharge of their office: "And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."** All that love to souls, and that regard to the advancement of the Divine honour, which are so essential to a Christian minister, proceed from him. Ministerial talents are his gift. The continual supplies of grace which are requisite in the whole course of the Christian ministry proceed from him: "The supply of the Spirit of Christ

* Dan. xii. 3. † Rev. xii. 1. ‡ Zech. iv. 10. § Matt. xxiii. 34
‖ Ephes. iv. 8, 11. ¶ 1 Tim. i. 12. ** 1 Tim. i. 14.

Jesus"* "There are diversities of administrations, but the same Lord."

2. They are, with all their concerns, at his absolute disposal. He, by the secret arrangements of his providence, appoints "the bound of their habitation," and allots their respective fields of labour, not unfrequently in a manner entirely foreign from their expectation; so he assigns them the measure of their success, setting before them on various occasions "an open door, which no man can shut."† (Speak of the angel of the church of Philadelphia.)

II. The import of his walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks.

1. It imports an accurate inspection of the state [of every church,] both as a society and as individuals. "I know thy works," is a declaration with which he frequently prefaces his admonitory epistles. Nothing in the behaviour of Christian churches escapes his notice, whose "eyes are as a flame of fire." He remarks the attention, or inattention, with which his messages are received; he observes who are formal and lukewarm, and who fervent and sincere in their worship; who are diligent in their attendance on the means of grace, and who are glad to avail themselves of trivial excuses for neglecting them. He notices all the different degrees of seriousness which professing Christians bring into the divine service. There is not a sigh from the contrite, not a tear of penitential sorrow, or of tender joy, that escapes his notice. "He looks not at outward appearances, but at the heart." He perceives the difference between those churches which have left their "first love," and those who are diligently pressing on to perfection; between those that are indifferent to the extension of his kingdom, and those who are incessantly labouring and praying for its enlargement; those who decline to the paths of error, and "hold the doctrine which he hates," and those who "hold fast the form of sound words."

2. His walking among them implies that his business, so to speak, lies in the management of his churches. It is his "building," his "husbandry."‡ The interest of his church is peculiarly his interest, in the maintenance of which his presence and grace are especially exerted. He walks among the churches as a proprietor in his field.

He superintends the affairs of the world, but always with a view to the enlargement and prosperity of his church. The church is his mystical body, with which he is most intimately and inseparably united. He rules the world by his sceptre, but he gladdens the church by his presence. The former consists only of his subjects, this of his brethren and sisters.

3. His walking among them denotes the complacency he takes in them. Something of complacency seems to be implied in this expression, "I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people."§

(Apply the whole.)

* Philip i. 19. † Rev. iii. 8. ‡ 1 Cor. iii. 9. § Lev xxvi. 11, 12

# XLI.

## NO TEMPLE IN HEAVEN.

**Rev xxi 22.—*And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.***

This book contains a prophecy of the state of the church from the time in which it was communicated to the consummation of all things. It includes the principal revolutions to which it was to be subject, and the assaults it was to sustain, during a series of ages, from the time of John to the end of the world. The chapter out of which my text is taken is, with great probability, considered as a description of the heavenly world. In the chapter preceding, we have a striking description of the day of judgment. "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."* After this, a new heaven and a new earth are described, very similar to the language of Peter: "For we look for a new heaven and a new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness." The perfection of the state represented here is such as can agree only with the heavenly world. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."† Among the other privileges, access to the tree of life is specified, evidently denoting a state of immortality. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."‡

Considering this as a description of the heavenly state, we shall first endeavour to point out the meaning and import of this declaration, and next attempt some practical improvement.

I. Let us endeavour to point out the meaning and import of this declaration,—"I saw no temple therein," &c.

1. It cannot be intended to insinuate that heaven will not be a state of devotion. It is in every part of the word of God, and in this book in particular, represented as a state of the highest and most exalted devotion.§ Devotion will then be carried to its highest perfection. The absence of the temple does not denote the absence of devotion: as it is the noblest employment of creatures here, it is impossible to suppose it will be neglected in the heavenly world.

2. Nor is it intended to intimate that there will not be most glorious and supernatural manifestations of God in that state. *Having* the

* Rev. xx. 11, 12.
† Rev. xxi. 4.
‡ Rev. xxii. 14.
§ Rev. xv. 2, 3; xiv. 2, 3.

glory of *God* is a most distinguishing part of its description. The peculiar presence of God is announced as one of its peculiar privileges.* "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell among them." Contrasting the present with the future state, the apostle says, "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face: then shall I see as I am seen, and know as I am known."

The import of this declaration may probably be expressed in the following particulars. There will be no place in the celestial world distinguished by peculiar tokens of the Divine presence above others.

(1.) A temple is a building set apart exclusively for the honour of God, where he was accustomed to manifest his presence in a visible symbol, in distinction from other places. The ancient temple was divided into three compartments. The court, at the door of which stood the brazen altar of burnt-offering. To this the victims were brought, and the Israelitish people had access. The second was the court of the priests, at the farthest end of which stood, on one side, the golden altar of incense, and on the other the table of the shew-bread. This it was the prerogative of the priests only to enter. It was styled, in distinction from the other, "the Holy Place." The third was the *Sanctum Sanctorum*, or "Holy of Holies," where was placed the mercy-seat, surrounded on each side by the cherubim, whose wings were stretched out so as to cover it; and upon it the Supreme Being manifested himself in a visible glory, like a king sitting upon his throne. Hence he was invoked by the saints of old, as "he that sat between the cherubim." This, which was the inmost recess of the temple, was the chamber of audience, and the place of the oracle. And to this the high-priest only had access, once a year, upon the great day of the atonement, which was the tenth of the seventh month. No other part of the Holy Land was ordinarily favoured with similar manifestations. As it was the peculiar distinction of the temple at Jerusalem, it conferred a [specific] sanctity on the place, whence it was styled the Holy City.

In heaven, the presence of God will not be restricted to a particular place: it will diffuse itself everywhere; in consequence of which the whole will become holy. There will be no part of it consecrated as a local temple, because the whole will be a temple. As it is said of the sun that the city will have no need of it, because the Lord God will enlighten it, and the Lamb be the light thereof; so it will be with respect to a temple. The whole will be so illuminated with the glory of God, so adorned with the most impressive exhibitions of his august presence, that there will be no distinction possessed by any part above another. Every region of it will be equally replete with the glory of God, which is the [thing] chiefly meant by the latter clause of the text,—"The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb will be the temple thereof." The inhabitants will have no occasion to remove from one place to another, or to approach to a particular spot, in order to [behold] the glory of God; but where they [are, they] will be alike sensible of his presence, and equally awed and transported by it. None will have

* Rev. xxi. 3.

occasion to adopt the language of the devout Psalmist, and say, "When shall I come and appear before God?" for they shall always appear before him alike; "they shall continually behold his face, and serve him day and night in his temple."

In the passage just now quoted, we find mention made of a temple; which is perfectly consistent with the declaration of the text, [in which] John declares he saw none. He is now describing heaven itself: in heaven he perceived no temple, no particular place assigned by way of distinction for the worship of God. In the former, he intends to represent heaven itself under the appellation of a temple.

(2.) A temple is distinguished by having certain services allotted to it, which it is unlawful to perform elsewhere. Thus, after the temple at Jerusalem was erected, it became criminal to perform certain rites of worship in any other place. The burning of incense and the offering of sacrifice were limited and restrained to that spot.* "Take heed to thyself that thou offerest not thy burnt-offerings in every place that thou seest; but in the place which the Lord shall choose in one of thy tribes, there shalt thou offer thy burnt-offerings, and there shalt thou do all that I command thee." "Thou mayst not eat within thy gates the tithe of thy corn, or of thy oil, or of thy vine, or of the firstling of thy herds, or of thy flock, nor any of the vows which thou vowest, nor thy free-will offerings, or heave offerings of thy hand; but thou must eat them before the Lord thy God in the place which the Lord thy God shall choose."

No distinction will subsist between the different mansions in our heavenly Father's house. As all will be equally holy, the same modes of worship will pervade the whole; and whatever will be suitable to one place will be suitable to all. In this sense, John saw no temple.

(3.) During the continuance of the temple, regular sacred seasons were appointed at which all the males of the nation were commanded to appear before God. Three times a-year, all the male part of the nation was ordered to present themselves before God at Jerusalem, the place which he chose to record his name. These periods were, the feast of the *passover*, the feast of *pentecost*, and the feast of *tabernacles*, or of in-gathering at the close of the year. Besides these solemn anniversaries, there were certain hours of prayer, mentioned in the third chapter of Acts, at which devout men were wont to frequent the temple, to present their supplications to God: these were the third, the sixth (corresponding to our noon), and the ninth hour. In the heavenly world, no distinction of sacred times and seasons will be known: no weekly rest, no annual solemnities, will be longer recognised; the devotion of its blessed inhabitants will be one eternal Sabbath. "There remaineth a rest" (*a keeping of Sabbath*), saith St. Paul, "for the people of God." Here the pious look forward with delight to the recurrence of the sacred day, when they may dismiss all earthly cares, and devote themselves more immediately to the service of the Most High: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go up unto the house of the Lord Our feet shall stand in thy courts, O Jerusalem!"

* Deut. xvi. 5; xv. 20; xii. 13.

(4.) This declaration is probably intended to intimate that devotion will no longer form a distinct part of the employment of the heavenly world, but that it will be intimately incorporated with all their actions and sentiments. In the present condition of our being, so many wants arise from the body, so many necessities of a worldly nature to be provided for, that it is but a small part of their time that many can devote to the offices of religion. We have two worlds with which we are concerned—the world that now is, and that which is to come; and these give birth to two distinct interests—the interests of the body and those of the soul. Though the latter are infinitely the most important, the former cannot, and ought not, to be neglected: they demand a large portion of our exertions, and with too many absorb the whole of their attention and solicitude. "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" is the general inquiry. Truly holy persons employ their hands upon the world, and set their hearts on heaven; but even these find it difficult, amid the distractions and cares of the present state, to keep their affections set upon the things that are above. Their souls too often cleave unto the dust, and their hearts are sometimes overcharged. Nothing of that nature will be experienced there: "God will be all in all." No wants will there remain to be supplied, no dangers to be averted, no provision to be made for futurity. The contemplation and enjoyment of the Great Eternal will present an ample occupation of the mind for ever and ever.

It may seem, in our present dark and imperfect state, difficult to conceive how the exercises of the mind and heart on the blessed God can employ an eternity. But we must remember that the object is infinite; that the creation is but an atom, or a point, compared to the immensity of his being and perfections; and if, in the survey and examination of the creation, the mind feels such ample scope, we need not wonder if its great Author supply an infinitely wider range of operation, when he lays himself open to the view of his creatures, and permits them to "see him as he is." When we possess an immediate and intuitive view of his nature and excellences, and no longer see him "through a glass darkly, but face to face," no doubt the powers of the soul will find full employment, without danger of feeling itself straitened in him, "who is all in all." There are probably faculties in the soul which are here either not apparent at all, or are very imperfectly developed. Among these, the powers of action and contemplation will be perfectly combined: the exercise of the reason will not interfere with that of the heart; but we shall be capable of feeling all the ecstasies of devotion, in conjunction with mental operations, with which it is at present scarcely compatible. We shall not worship at one time, and at another be engaged in active pursuits and employments; but, while we burn with the highest ardours of devotion, we shall be capable of doing the will of God, of executing those mysterious purposes which it is his wish we should accomplish.

The pursuit of truth, the enjoyment of good, and the actual business of life require distinct portions of time. While the soul is intensely

employed in comparing its ideas, the movements of the heart languish, or are suspended. It is very difficult, in the present state, to be ardent and speculative,—for the understanding and the heart to be both intensely engaged; but this is owing to the limitation of our capacity. It is incident to a state of imperfection, which we may easily suppose will be done away.

For a similar reason, the active pursuits of life are scarcely compatible with the attainment of knowledge. In our present gross corporeal state, the effort necessary to keep up the animal machine in a state of intense exertion exhausts the vigour of the mind, and leaves little room for the powerful exercise of the reason. In eternity, we may readily conceive it will be otherwise: this inert and sluggish body will be replaced by a spiritual body; motion will be performed without fatigue; the body will be a fit instrument for executing the purposes of the soul.

At present, the occupations in which we are engaged have no immediate relation to the Deity; they are capable of being sanctified only by a general intention of pleasing God, while it is impossible to advert incessantly to his presence, or to make him the immediate object of our thought. In eternity, the capacity will be so enlarged and extended that the idea of God will be incessantly impressed, the beams of his glory will perpetually penetrate the heart, and the fire of love will never cease to burn upon the altar.

### *Improvement.*

I. How impossible for undevout persons to be fitted for heaven; how impossible for them to relish its employments or enjoyments.

II. How anxious should we be to improve the seasons of devotion and the means of grace as a preparation for heaven.

III. What a well-founded hope of heaven may they indulge who feel a supreme delight in the exercises of religion. Such are evidently ripening for an invisible and eternal state.

IV. Hence we perceive the exact correspondence of the employment of the heavenly world to the taste and disposition of real Christians.*

* Preached at Leicester Sunday morning, August 13, 1815

# LETTERS

# LETTERS.

## I.

### TO THE BAPTIST CHURCH, BROADMEAD, BRISTOL.

*Old Aberdeen, King's College, Dec. 4, 1783.**

DEAR AND HONOURED BRETHREN,

I DULY received your affectionate letter, in which you expressed your desire of engaging my labours as an assistant minister. Your request does me honour, and confers upon me an obligation which no efforts of mine can fully discharge. Yet, young and inexperienced as I am, I tremble to think of engaging in so arduous a work, especially in a situation where all my incapacity will be doubly felt. I cannot but think a few years would be necessary to enable me to gratify the lowest expectations. To plunge into the midst of life at so tender an age, with so little experience and so small a stock of knowledge, almost terrifies me. Your candid judgment of my past services I acknowledge with a mixture of pleasure and surprise,—pleased to attain the approbation of the wise and good, and surprised I in any measure have attained it, which I can attribute to nothing but the tenderness and forbearance which have ever strongly marked your conduct.

A retired and private sphere would indeed be more upon a level with my abilities, and congenial to my temper; yet I would willingly sacrifice my private inclinations to more important views, and lose sight of myself if I could benefit others. My reluctance, therefore, to obey your call arises merely from a feeling of my weakness, and my secret fear lest you should hereafter have occasion to repent it. If you could have dispensed with my labours till the final close of my studies, I might then have hoped to have been more able to serve you; but if not, I submit. Let me but crave your prayers, that as my day so my strength may be. Your welfare, honoured brethren, will ever lie near my heart; numberless reflections concur with a thousand tender recollections of past kindness to keep it there. But these are not my only inducements to embrace your proposals. It is an additional pleasure to me when I reflect with whom I have the honour to be connected,—with one whom I most sincerely reverence, and to whom I am bound by every tie of affection and gratitude.† I hope I

* Mr. Hall was at this time in his twentieth year.

† Dr. Caleb Evans.

undertake this work in the fear of God, and look forward to that awful day when all these solemn transactions shall be reviewed, and every secret motive that entered into them will be brought to light. Wishing you, dear brethren, all prosperity, and that you may be "steadfast in that day,"

I subscribe myself yours, &c.

ROBERT HALL, Jun.

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## II.

### TO THE REV. ISAIAH BIRT, PLYMOUTH.

Dear Sir, *Cambridge, Feb.* 5, 1791.

I have frequently thought it something remarkable, that you and I have had an intimate acquaintance for many years, and yet that we have scarcely exchanged a letter. Our frequent occasional interviews have formerly rendered this less necessary; but now that I shall probably be settled in a distant situation, and an opportunity of seeing each other may seldom occur, I cannot satisfy myself without requesting a stated correspondence. You will excuse my earnestness to solicit this, when you recollect that it is the effect of that fixed and well-founded esteem I always did and always shall bear you. I will communicate to you, not the incidents of the day or of the week, for my time at present slides away without incident, but the inward sentiments of my heart, and the trifles, serious or gay, that spring up there; happy if I can imagine for a moment I am conversing with you as we did in the days of yore, when, without care or sorrow, we sauntered in the fields near Bristol. Ah, happy days, never to return again! I am at present at Cambridge, in the element of peace at least, if not of happiness; and indeed, after the tumults of strife and din of parties, quiet itself seems happiness.

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Perhaps you may wish to be informed of some particulars relating to my present situation. It is, on the whole, happy. The people seem very harmonious, and much united to me. I could wish their sentiments were more orthodox, though the far greater part of them are sufficiently so. They who are not seem very ready to hear cool, dispassionate reasoning on the other side of the question. I have tried their pulse several times since I have been here. On the first Sabbath of my arrival, I preached in the morning on Heb. ix. 13—"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God," &c.—an entirely controversial sermon in defence of the atonement. I had the satisfaction of finding few, very few, who did not acknowledge the justice of my reflections, and that they who were not convinced were not displeased. I should be happy if Providence should make me an humble instrument of with-

standing the dangerous errors that are in vogue, and of preventing or lessening their growth at least, in the place where Providence may appoint my lot. I intend very soon to preach a sermon professedly on the divinity of Jesus Christ. This and the atonement I am more and more convinced lie at the foundation of the true system of vital religion; nor will sinners ever be converted to God by a ministry that excludes them. I hope I am not censorious; but I am persuaded that much of the liberality so much talked of is rather a fashionable cant than any genuine candour of heart. At present I am a boarder, and shall continue so, in case I should stay here, for some time. I have free access to all the libraries gratis, by means of acquaintance in the university.

Pray write soon, very soon.

I am yours affectionately,

ROBERT HALL.

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## III.

### ACCEPTING THE PASTORAL CHARGE OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH AT CAMBRIDGE.

*To the Church lately under the pastoral care of Mr. Robinson:*

Dear Brethren,

I am truly sensible of the honour you have done me in inviting me to the pastoral office among you. I am convinced of my inability adequately to discharge its arduous duties; but relying on your candour and the hopes of superior assistance, I will attempt it to the best of my power, and beg an interest in your prayers, that my endeavours for your spiritual improvement may be succeeded, and that I may be able to commend myself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

I remain your affectionate friend and brother,

ROBERT HALL

*Cambridge, July* 23, 1791.

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## IV.

### TO MISS WILKINS,

AFTERWARD MRS. FYSH, OF CAMBERWELL.

Dear Madam,

I hope you will excuse the liberty that friendship dictates, of sending you these lines. The interest you possess in the affections of your friends, and their solicitude for your happiness, render it impossible

they should hear of your affliction without deeply sympathizing with you. Among these I beg leave to have the honour of classing myself; and though least, not last. I was the other day at Mr. W——'s, and was informed you still continued extremely indisposed. I immediately determined to take the liberty of writing, to express my esteem and sympathy. I upbraid myself heavily for not having snatched an opportunity of seeing you before I left Bristol; and had I foreseen the prolongation of your illness, I certainly would not have omitted it. From me, who have suffered so much, it would be unpardonable if distress of every kind did not extort a tear,—much more when the sufferer is a friend whose virtues and talents I respect and admire. This world is indeed a scene of suffering; and it ought, in some measure, to reconcile us to our lot, that in feeling distress we strike chords in unison with the whole universe. Adversity is capricious in its times and seasons; but its visitations, sooner or later, never fail. In some, it overwhelms the first hopes of life, so that they no sooner begin to taste felicity in prospect, than they are crossed with hopeless disappointment: others it permits to advance further, waits till they spread the foundations of happiness deep and wide, that, just when they have nearly finished the superstructure, it may overwhelm them with a more extensive desolation. Some are racked with pains and agonies of body; and others are preys to disappointed passions and blasted hopes, wasted with devouring regrets, and sick at heart with melancholy retrospects; wishing in vain they could arrest the wings of time, and put the current of life back. Of all these classes, every individual thinks *his* misfortunes the greatest. For the same reason we are never at a loss to hear our own voice, be it ever so slender: the cry of a pierced heart sounds shrill in the solitary ear of the sufferer. Since we cannot essentially meliorate, let us endeavour to allay, our anguish by moderating our expectations. I am persuaded all we can reasonably hope for on this side the grave is tranquillity,—not the insensibility of a statue, but the placidity of a well-informed mind, relying on the promises and cheering prospects of immortality. But why do I thus address one who is as well acquainted with every subject of Christian consolation as I can pretend to [be?] I am persuaded you will edify your friends as much by your patience in affliction as you have enlivened them in better days by the exercise of your sprightlier powers. Virtue is always consistent, and guided by its dictates you will never fail to be an example. This scene of suffering will not always last, nor do we suffer "as those without hope." It is, indeed, the night of nature, a short night, and not utterly dark: it will soon pass away, and be succeeded by a bright and endless day. Æneas comforts his companions in the midst of distress, by telling them that the retrospect of their sufferings will hereafter be delightful to them. Whether we shall in this world be indulged with such a satisfaction I know not; but surely it will be a source of the most pleasing reflection in a happier world.

Of Bishop Leighton, whose sermons I wish you to read, Bishop Burnet declares, that during a strict intimacy of many years, he never

saw him for one moment in any other temper than that in which he should wish to live and die: and if any human composition could form such a character, it must be his own. Full of the richest imagery, and breathing a spirit of the most sublime and unaffected devotion, the reading him is a truce to all human cares and human passions; and I can compare it to nothing but the beautiful representation in the twenty-third Psalm—it is like "lying down in green pastures, and by the side of still waters."

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*Cambridge*, 1791.

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## V.

### TO MRS. FYSH, OF CAMBERWELL,

ON THE DEATH OF HER SISTER, MRS. PARSONS.

My dear Friend, *Cambridge, August* 14, 1796.

Permit me to express the deep interest I take in your distress, from the loss of the best of friends and the best of sisters, in the loss of dear Mrs. Parsons. How many losses are united! She has left a husband to lament the most lovely of wives, you the most endeared of sisters, the church of Christ one of its brightest ornaments, and the world one of its fairest examples: all, all have fallen a victim in this most excellent woman. I have not met with any event for many years that has affected me at all equally. Had I been permitted to draw aside the mysterious veil that hides futurity; could I have had any presentiments I saw her at —— for the last time, how solemn would have been the moments, how awfully interesting my emotions! I pity her husband—I pity her sisters: this is a stroke which must be severely felt in the tenderest manner. I know the heart when recently wounded must be indulged in the luxury of grief; and if there ever was an occasion which could justify the most poignant regret, it is the present, in which we lament the loss of so much excellence. But I hope you will by degrees inure your imagination to dwell less on your loss, and more on her happiness. What a glorious display of the power of Christianity! what a triumphant departure! O, that I may die the death of Mrs. Parsons, and that my last end may be like hers! Her life was an ornament to Christianity—a pattern to her sex. Immortality dawned on her enraptured mind, even before it quitted its earthly abode; and her pure and elevated soul made an easy transit to the society of the blessed. Her career was short, but illustrious; and she crowded into her little sphere the virtues of a long life. Short as her continuance was upon earth, she was permitted to exemplify the duties of every character, and to imprint, in indelible characters, on the

memories of all who were honoured with her acquaintance, the perfections of a friend, a sister, a mother, and a wife. It is true, she has slept the sleep of death; but she sleeps in Jesus: she has gone before you into the holy of holies: she will meet you at the great rendezvous of being, the assembly of the just; and, in the mean time, instead of being an object of *your* pity, probably looks down upon *you* with ineffable tenderness and compassion. I have seen, besides your letter, one from Mrs. Gutteridge; and I must say, I never heard, on the whole, of so calm, so triumphant a death: it seemed as if she had been permitted to step into heaven before her final departure, that she might thence address herself to her friends with more serenity, dignity, and effect.

What, my dear friend, besides Christianity, can thus scatter the horrors of the soul? What else could enable a young lady, in the bloom of life, with a prosperous fortune, beloved by a husband, endeared to her friends, and esteemed by the whole world, to triumph in the thoughts of dissolution? Divine Christianity! it is thine only to comfort and support the languishing and dying.

I hope all Mrs. Parsons' numerous acquaintance will be properly impressed with this singular dispensation of Providence. Let them ask themselves whether the loose skeptical principles of the age are at all adapted to such a scene; whether they have any thing in them that will enable them to exert the calm heroism displayed in the most trying moment by this departed excellence. Let me hope some one, at least will be impressed by this wonderful example of the power of religion.

Death has made frequent visits to your family; the youngest is now snatched away. Mr. Beddome, poor Richard Beddome, and now Mrs. Parsons; in how short a time they have followed each other!

I find your dear deceased sister expressed her anxiety at the progress of Deism with her last breath. To a serious mind it affords a most melancholy prospect: but you must observe it does not seize the mind at once; it advances by the progressive stages of Socinianism and dissipation. Men first lose their relish for what is *vital* and distinguishing in Christianity, before they dispute its evidences, or renounce its authority. Lax notions of the person of Christ, a forgetfulness of his mediation, place the mind in a deistical state, and prepare it for the most licentious opinions.

The consolations of your dear deceased sister did not result from a general belief of the doctrine of immortality, in which the Socinians place the whole of revelation; but in specific views of Christ as a Saviour, and the prospect of being for ever with him. My dear friend, let us hold fast *this kind of Christianity*, without wavering, as the antidote of death.

Excuse this freedom, which results not from any suspicion of your own defection, but from a friendly concern for some for whom we both retain the sincerest regards. My paper forbids me to add more.

Present my most affectionate respects to Mr. Fysh, and accept the same yourself, from

Your affectionate and sympathizing Friend,

ROBERT HALL.

## VI.

### TO THE REV. JAMES PHILLIPS, HAVERFORDWEST.

My dear Friend. *Cambridge, June 7, 1799*

How could you suspect for a moment that I wished to dissolve my friendship with you, a friendship which I have always esteemed a distinguished honour and happiness? No, my dear friend. My long silence is indeed inexcusable; but impute it to any cause, and you will do me more justice than by suspecting my diminution of regard. My aversion to letter-writing you are well acquainted with. I formed many resolutions to surmount it: but, in the moment of trial, am baffled. I sincerely sympathize with you in the loss of your child; but, my dear friend, do not suffer your spirits to sink. Remember the tenure on which all human enjoyments are held, the wisdom and sovereignty of their great Author, and the gracious promise afforded to true Christians, that "all things shall work together for good to them that love him." Remember the many blessings with which a kind Providence still indulges you. Ought you not to rejoice that your affectionate companion in life is spared; and that, though your child is snatched from your embraces, he has escaped from a world of sin and sorrow? The stamp of immortality is placed on his happiness, and he is encircled by the arms of a compassionate Redeemer. Had he been permitted to live, and you had witnessed the loss of his virtue, you might have been [reserved] to suffer still severer pangs. A most excellent couple in our congregation are now melancholy spectators of a son dying, at nineteen years of age, by inches, a victim to his vices. They have frequently regretted he did not die several years since, when his life was nearly despaired of, in a severe fever. "Who knoweth what is good for a man all the days of this his vain life, which he spends as a shadow?"

Many interesting scenes have occurred since our interview. About six months ago, I was attacked by a violent fever; and in my own apprehensions, for about two days was on the borders of eternity. I never before felt my mind so calm and happy. Filled with the most overwhelming sense of my own unworthiness, my mind was supported merely by a faith in Christ crucified. I would not for the world have parted with that text, "The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin." I never before saw such a beauty and grandeur in the way of salvation by the death of Christ, as on that occasion. I am fully persuaded the evangelical doctrines alone are able to support the mind in the near views of death and judgment. May you and I be more and more grounded in a conviction of their truth, and acquainted with their power! It is to these doctrines the revelation of Christ is chiefly indebted for its efficacy in the hearts and lives of men.

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## VII.

### TO THE REV. JAMES PHILLIPS.

My dear Friend, *Cambridge, Feb.* 14, 1801.

I have long purposed to write to you, and should have done so, but from that unhappy reluctance to writing which is almost a part of my nature. I hope you will do me the justice to believe it did not arise from any abatement of love and esteem. But a truce to apologies

I am heartily glad to find you have preached at Clapham, where I hope you will find much to comfort you in the opportunity of doing good; for we can be truly happy but in proportion as we are the instruments of promoting the happiness of others. From what little I have heard of the people, you will meet kind and respectful treatment; but there will be much to damp your zeal, against which, I doubt not, you will be upon your guard. You will have pleasing society; and the vicinity to London has many advantages. May we, my dear friend, "work while it is to-day, for the hour is shortly coming when we can work no longer."

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Mr. Hill, by whom you sent your letter, just called in the morning, but could not make any stay. He seemed an agreeable, sensible man. If you should see Mr. Rowland Hill, present my Christian respects to him, though unknown, and assure him it would give me uncommon pleasure to see and hear him at Cambridge, and that I shall think myself much honoured by hearing him preach in my pulpit. I went into the vestry and spoke to him about two years ago, in Surrey Chapel; but he did not recollect me, and I felt a reluctance to make so free as to mention my name, and therefore only mentioned you as a common friend and retired. He is a man for whom I ever entertained a very high esteem. Whatever a misjudging world may say, such men as these will "shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever." May my soul, though at an humble distance, be admitted among them! I have just been reading, with very great pleasure, and, I hope, some profit, Orton and Stonehouse's Letters to Stedman. They contain most excellent prudential, moral, and religious instruction; devout, liberal, rational, yet fervent piety of the stamp of Doddridge, who is now my prime favourite among divines. If you have not seen them, they will richly repay your perusal. Dr. Stonehouse and Miss More both lived at Bristol at the time I resided there; and yet, such was my extreme folly, I never took any means of becoming acquainted with either of them, which might very easily have been done. "Surely I have been more brutish than any man." What opportunities of knowledge and improvement have I lost, and have now reached the meridian of life, and am but a child! I may adopt, with more propriety than any man that ever lived, the prayer,—"Remember not the sins of my youth."

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What strange news is this of Mr. Pitt's leaving the ministry? I am glad of it, though I suppose the men that succeed will persist in the same measures. But a schism in the cabinet bodes ill for the permanence of the party; so that I hope the present change is only a prelude to one more important. The present ministry can surely never be permanent. We must have peace, or we are inevitably and speedily ruined. But I hate politics, and have not read a paper above twice these nine months; so that you must not suppose I am very profound on these subjects.

You have heard, no doubt, of the death of poor Mr. ——, of ——. He departed this life, Monday se'nnight, at ———. He was at dinner at Mr. ———'s, and was taken with a second apoplectic fit between the two courses, and expired in about two hours. He never spake, except the moment after he was seized; when, in answer to Mrs. ———'s inquiry, he said he was poorly. Poor man! he had very little happiness in life, and his last years were very *un*happy. No spirits, no exertion, no usefulness! I sometimes think it is a mercy I was not a "gentleman parson;" for with my natural indolence, the temptations of that character would have completed my ruin. "Let us work, my dear friend, while it is called to-day."

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Pray, have you heard any more about the design of the government to suppress village preaching and Sunday-schools? Our friends at Clapham were very apprehensive of it some time since, but we hear little of it in the country. Mr. Simeon informed me lately he had little doubt something of the sort would be attempted. He gave some intimation of the same kind in a sermon he preached to his own people. Pray inform me of all you have heard about it, for it is an affair which lies with considerable weight on my mind. If there should be any thing done, we shall see dismal times. Do you know whether any thing has been written on the subject? Mr. Simeon and I are upon very friendly terms. I lately dined with him at his own rooms, and have repeatedly met him in company, in which the conversation has been very agreeable. The reconciliation was effected principally by the intervention of Mr. Owen, of Fulham, and of Alderman Ind. A paper was drawn up, and signed by each party. We are upon very comfortable terms with the church people at present; never was less party spirit at Cambridge. I wish I could see more good done, but yet I must not complain. Our congregation is very flourishing, and things wear an agreeable aspect. But my paper admonishes me to close. Pray write to me very soon, if not immediately, and let us see you at Cambridge as early as possible. Remember me respectfully to Mr. Thompson Miss Wilkinson, Mr. Beddome, &c.

I am, dear Sir,

Yours constantly,

ROBERT HALL.

## VIII.

### TO THE REV. JAMES PHILLIPS.

My dear Friend, *Cambridge, May* 26, 1801.

I thank you for your very kind letter, and for your invitation to pay you an early visit at Clapham. You know, and every one who knows me knows, there is no friend living whom I should be so glad to see as yourself, but am afraid it will not be in my power to gratify this inclination at present. I am just going to see my old friend Kinghorn at Norwich, where I shall be absent one, possibly two, Sabbaths. In the fall of the year I am engaged to visit Bristol, and to go as far as Plymouth; so that I am afraid it will not be in my power to pay my London and Clapham friends a visit this summer. I shall fully expect, however, to see you at Cambridge some time in the summer. It is long since you were here; and we are anxiously desirous of seeing you, with Mrs. Phillips, to whom I beg to be affectionately remembered. It gives me extreme pleasure to hear of your great acceptance at Clapham. Miss Wilkinson spoke in raptures of you to Mrs. Gutteridge. The distinguished respect the people have shown you does them much more honour than it can do you. You are intimate, I find, with Mr. Beddome's family. They are, indeed, a lovely family, truly friendly, liberal, and intelligent: there is no house where I spend my time more agreeably in London or the environs. The parcel you sent me consists of a very polite letter from Mr. Roberts, enclosing a copy of verses, elegant, and truly and strictly poetical, that is, replete with *fiction*, containing praises which my heart compels me to disclaim with a sigh! O my friend, what an infinity of time I have lost, and how ardently do I long to do something which shall convince the world I have not lived in vain! My wishes, in this respect, will, it is to be feared, never be fulfilled. Tranquillity is not my lot. The prey, in early life, of passion and calamity, I am now perfectly devoured with an impatience to redeem time, and to be of some lasting benefit to the world, at least to the church. But this *inter nos*.

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You wish me to answer Bishop Horsley. You have seen, probably, Rowland Hill's sermon. I should be little disposed to *answer* Horsley, or any individual. Were any thing to be done, it should, in my opinion, enter into the whole matter, containing an ample defence of the liberty of worship, and of the specific efforts of Methodists and dissenters in instructing and evangelizing mankind.* I, some time since, put down some thoughts on this subject; but whether I shall proceed will depend on the conduct of the government; as a laboured defence would be,

* See the Fragments on Toleration, &c. in Vol. II.—Ed.

probably, impolitic, without a projected attack. Pray come soon to see us. My respects to Mr. Thompson, Miss Wilkinson, Beddomes, Petries, and other friends, as if named.

I am, dear Sir,
Yours constantly and affectionately,
ROBERT HALL.

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## IX.

### TO MRS. TUCKER, PLYMOUTH DOCK.

Dear Madam, *Cambridge, Feb.* 18, 1802.

I know not what apology to make for having so long neglected to fulfil my part of the mutual promise of correspondence. Impute it to any thing rather than indifference; for I can assure you, with the utmost sincerity, that your kindness to me while I had the happiness of being under your roof left an impression on my mind of gratitude and esteem which no time can efface. It is doing no sort of justice to my feelings to say that it exceeded any thing of the kind I ever experienced in my life; and heightens the regret I feel at the probability of few opportunities of personal intercourse with a friend who has so great a claim to my regard, and in whose welfare I shall always feel myself so deeply interested. When I look back on my past days (alas! why should I ever look back), the few I spent at Plymouth Dock appear like a bright spot in a dreary prospect. Though my friends at Bristol were disposed to be displeased at my staying so long in Devonshire, I shall never repent of it, since it afforded me an opportunity of renewing and cementing a virtuous friendship—the only kind of friendship that will flourish to eternal ages. Yes, madam, I hope to renew with you the remembrance of my visit to Dock, and of your kindness, before the Throne where distance will no more interrupt the intercourse of kindred minds. What a happiness to reflect, though separated here, we are advancing every step nearer to the place of meeting; and in the mean time we are mingling our addresses at the same mercy-seat, imbibing pleasure at the same spring, and deposing our anxieties in the same compassionate bosom. There is a divine reality in the communion of saints, which I pray we may more and more experience.

I have just been reading Dr. Whitehead's Life of Mr. Wesley: it has given me a much more enlarged idea of the virtues and labours of that extraordinary man than I ever had before. I would not incur the guilt of that virulent abuse which Toplady cast upon him, for points merely speculative and of very little importance, for ten thousand worlds. When will the Christian world cease disputing about religion, and begin to enter into its spirit, and practise its precepts? I am attempting to write a vindication of village preaching and of Sunday-schools, but when it will be out I do not know; I endeavour to do a little at it every day, but am a slow hand.

From several quarters I am given to understand my preaching at Plymouth and Dock gave general dissatisfaction. This intelligence gives me no particular concern, being conscious of my upright intentions; but if it arose in any degree from the practical complexion of my addresses I am sorry, as it indicates a tincture of that antinomian spirit which threatens to deluge the church.

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I am, dear Madam,
Your affectionate friend,
ROBERT HALL.

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## X.

### TO MRS. TUCKER.

Dear Madam, *Shelford, Feb.* 14, 1804.

In truth I had almost despaired of the honour of ever hearing from you any more: it was therefore no small gratification to me to be indulged once more with a sight of your handwriting. I sincerely sympathize with you, my amiable friend, in the heavy loss you have sustained, in being deprived of so excellent a father, who must have been endeared to you in no ordinary degree, not only by the ties of nature, but by the peculiar tenderness and affection he ever displayed through an intimate and almost uninterrupted intercourse of a long series of years. I know by experience the pang which the loss of an affectionate parent produces, though under circumstances which possibly might render the blow somewhat less severe than that which you sustain. For many years previous to the death of my most excellent father, my situation had permitted me but little opportunity of intercourse, which, though it did not in the least impair my esteem or reverence, probably diminished that tenderness and vehemence of attachment which virtuous children never fail to feel towards the deserving parents with whom they reside. Allowing, however, for this difference, I well know the desolating, the withering sensation which pervades the heart on the loss of an affectionate father. We feel, with a conviction as instantaneous as lightning, that the loss is irreparable,—that the void can never be supplied, and that, however many amiable and excellent friends we may have left, there is none who *will so naturally care for our souls.* I can most easily conceive, therefore, and most tenderly sympathize with, the sorrow which so great a blow must inflict on so tender a heart. The aids of reason and religion may inspire resignation; but nothing but the torrent of time will wear away the traces of sorrow, and leave in the heart a tender and not an afflicting remembrance. It is needless, to a mind so vigorous as yours, to recall to your remembrance the many sources of gratitude which remain in the midst of your affliction, and the great alleviations which accompany it.

You will reflect, I am persuaded, with gratitude, on the great number of years your dear father was spared to you; you will remember the moral impossibility of his continuing to enjoy, at so advanced [an age,] many additional years of happiness on earth; and, what will afford you the truest consolation, you will follow him within the veil, and contemplate him resting from his labours, and sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God. How infinitely indebted, my amiable friend, are we to that gospel which gives us everlasting consolation, and a good hope through grace! May He who alone has immediate access to the heart calm every agitation, and solace every disquietude of your breast! My excellent friend will not, I am persuaded, abandon herself to immoderate sorrow. I trust, at least, you will be extremely upon your guard against indulging that luxury of grief, as it has been termed, which, however congenial to the extreme sensibility of your temper, would disqualify you alike for happiness and duty. Your domestic station will, happily for you, afford that occupation and diversion to your thoughts which will have a powerful tendency to moderate the excesses of grief.

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I am, dear Madam,
Yours most sincerely and respectfully,
ROBERT HALL

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## XI.

### TO MR. HEWITT FYSH, CAMBERWELL,

ON THE DEATH OF MRS. FYSH.

My dear Friend, *Shelford, March* 11, 1804.

I deeply sympathize with you in the great loss you have sustained by the decease of your most excellent wife. It is a stroke which will be long felt by all her surviving friends; how much more by a person with whom she was so long and so happily united! There are many considerations, however, which must occur to your mind, in alleviation of your distress. The dear deceased had long been rendered incapable by the severity of her affliction of enjoying life; and a further extension of it would have been but a prolongation of wo. Much as her friends must regret her loss, to have been eagerly solicitous for her continuance here would have been a refined selfishness, rather than true friendship. She was spared for the kindest purposes; to exemplify the power of religion in producing a cheerful resignation to the will of God, through a long series of suffering, to a degree which I never saw equalled in any other instance. *There was the faith and patience of the saints.* Her graces were most severely tried, and surely never did any shine brighter. The most active and zealous services in religion could not have yielded more glory to God than the dignified

composure, the unruffled tranquillity, and the unaltered sweetness she maintained amid her trials. O, my dear friend, let the image of her virtues be ever impressed on your heart, and ever improved as an incentive to that close walk with God which laid the foundation of all her excellence. To have had an opportunity of contemplating the influence of genuine religion so intimately, and under so interesting a form, is a privilege which falls to the lot of few, and is surely one of the most inestimable advantages we can possess. That she was spared to you so long—that her patience continued unexhausted amid so severe a pressure—and, above all, that you have so well-grounded an assurance of her happiness, must fill you with a grateful sense of the Divine goodness. This state is designed to be a mingled scene, in which joy and sorrow, serenity and storms, take their turns. A perpetuity of either would be unsuitable to us. An uninterrupted series of prosperity would fill us with worldly passions. An unbroken continuity of adversity would unfit us for exertion. *The spirit would fail before him, and the souls which he hath made.* Pain and pleasure, scenes of satisfaction and sorrow, are admirably attempered with each other; so as to give us constant room for thankfulness, and yet to remind us that *this is not our rest.* Our dear and invaluable friend has entered into the world of perfect spirits, to which she made so near an approach during her continuance here. To a mind so refined, and exercised in the school of affliction, so resigned to the Divine will, and so replete with devotion and benevolence, how easy and delightful was the transition! To her *to live was Christ, and to die was gain.* Let us improve this dispensation of Providence by imitating her example; let us cherish her memory with reverential tenderness; and consider it as an additional call to all we have received before to *seek the things that are above.* I confess the thought of so dear a friend having left this world makes an abatement of its value in my estimation, as I doubt not it will still more in yours. The thought of my journey to London gives me little or no pleasure: for I shall hear the accents of that voice which so naturally expressed the animation of benevolence—I shall behold that countenance which displayed so many amiable sentiments—no more. But can we wish her back? Can we wish to recall her from that blissful society which she has joined, and where she is singing a new song? No, my dear friend!—you will not be so selfish. You will, I trust, aspire with greater ardour than ever after the heavenly world, and be daily imploring fresh supplies of that grace which will fit you for an everlasting union with our deceased friend. I hope her amiable nieces will profit by this expressive event. And as they have (blessed be God for it!) *begun to seek after Sion with their faces thitherward*, that they will walk forward with additional firmness and alacrity. I shall make little or no stay in London on my first journey; but, as I long to see you, will spend the 11th instant (that is, the evening preceding my engagement to preach) at your house, if agreeable. I shall be glad to see Mr. Dore, but pray do not ask strangers.

I am your sympathizing friend,

ROBERT HALL.

## XII.

### TO DR. GREGORY.

ORIGIN AND OBJECT OF THE ECLECTIC REVIEW.

*Foulmire (near Cambridge), Oct.* 30, 1804.

My dear Friend,

You have probably heard of the project of a new Review, called the Eclectic Review, which is intended to counteract the irreligious bias which seems to attach to almost all literary journals. Whether a sufficient number of persons of real talents can be procured to give it permanent credit and support, appears to me very doubtful. Mr. Greathead has written to request my assistance, and I intend occasionally to write in it. I have at the same time taken the liberty to mention Mr. Gregory, as a person admirably adapted to conduct the mathematical and astronomical department, if he can be persuaded. Mr. Greathead has accordingly requested me to write to you on this subject, and to assure you that your assistance will be most welcome, and the terms your own. I really think a review of the kind proposed would be a public benefit: as the cause of piety and moderate orthodoxy stands no chance at present. Will you permit me to inform Mr. Greathead, to whom it is left to treat with writers, that you are willing to contribute to it in the line of mathematics and natural philosophy?

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## XIII.

### TO WILLIAM HOLLICK, ESQ. OF WHITTLESFORD, NEAR CAMBRIDGE.

ON HIS OWN RECOVERY FROM A SEVERE MALADY.

My dear Friend, *Leicester, Feb.* 26, 1805.

I thought it would be some satisfaction to you to hear that I continue, through the blessing of God, perfectly well. My health, through Divine mercy, was never better; nor can I be sufficiently thankful to that good Providence which has recovered me from the gates of death. Motives for gratitude crowd in upon me on every side; and the most I have to complain of is, that my heart is so little alive to their impression.

When, my dear sir, we look back upon past life, what a series of evidences present themselves of a presiding and parental care! With what propriety may we adopt the language of David: "Bless th-

Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name; who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and with tender mercies!" I am more and more convinced that nothing deserves to be called life that is not devoted to the service of God; and that piety is the only true wisdom. But, alas! how difficult it is to get these lessons deeply impressed on the heart, and wrought into the whole habit of the mind! I have not yet been at Arnsby, but shall go there in a day or two, and propose to spend about ten days there; and shall probably visit Cambridge in little more than a fortnight. My spirits are rather low; but my mind is composed, and in some measure resigned to the leading and conduct of Divine Providence. The narrow bounds of my experience have furnished me with such a conviction of the vanity of this world, and the illusion of its prospects, that I indulge no eager hopes. If God enables me to do some little good, and preserves me from great calamities, it will be enough, and infinitely more than I deserve; for I have been, in the most emphatic sense of the word, "an unprofitable servant."

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I am, my dear Sir,
Yours affectionately,
ROBERT HALL

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## XIV.

### TO DR. GREGORY.

#### ON THE CERTAINTY ATTENDING RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE.

My dear Friend, *Foulmire, Sept.* 4, 1805.

Let me beg you will not impute my long silence to a diminution of esteem or affection. It arose simply from my being conscious of my utter inability to make any such reply to your letter as should be in the least degree satisfactory. The subject on which you have touched in your last is so unspeakably intricate, that the more I have reflected upon it, the more I have seemed to feel myself lost and perplexed. Of all the problems proposed to the human understanding, the inquiry respecting the certainty of the objects of human knowledge seems the most difficult of solution. If the ideal theory of Locke be true, and there be no resemblance between the impressions made on the senses and the inherent qualities of external objects, we cannot be said to have any absolute knowledge of things without us. In things of an abstract nature, such as the relations of quantity, the consciousness of a distinct agreement and disagreement of our ideas lays a sufficient basis of science, though the objects themselves to which the science is referred be supposed to have no existence. It matters not whether there be a circle in the world, in regard to the certainty with which we accede to the propositions which explain its properties. It is

entirely an affair of the *mind*—an arrangement of its internal conceptions. When we transfer our ideas to religion, they appear to attain as much certainty at least as satisfies us in the common affairs of life. We must at once abandon all reasoning, or admit the proofs of design in the works of nature; and design necessarily implies a designing agent. Thus the being of a God appears to rest on the firmest basis, though it may be impossible to determine, from the light of reason, *what* that being is. When we advance to revelation, the evidence of testimony is as clearly applicable to the supernatural facts of Scripture as to any other species of facts whatsoever; and we seem capable of knowing as much of God in his works and ways as of any other subject. I concur with you entirely, that the *phenomena* of religion are perfectly on a level in this respect with any other phenomena; and cannot but think that there is a very exact analogy subsisting between grace and force, together with other principles, whose existence we are obliged to admit, though we know nothing of them but in their effects. We can never penetrate beyond effects; we can never contemplate causes in *themselves*, at least in our present dark and benighted condition: so that the skeptical tendency of metaphysical science ought to come in aid of our religious belief, by showing that religion labours under no other difficulties than those which envelop all the fundamental principles of knowledge. The profoundest metaphysician will, in my opinion (*cæteris paribus*), be always the humblest Christian. Superficial minds will be apt to start at the obscurities of religion, and to conceive that every thing is plain which relates to the objects of science and the affairs of common life. But the profound thinker will perceive the fallacy of this; and when he observes the utter impossibility of tracing the real relations of impressions and phenomena to the *objects out of ourselves*, together with the necessity of believing a First Cause, he will be ready to conclude that the Deity is, in a manner, the only reality, and the truths relating to him the most certain, as well as the most important. Common minds mistake the *deep impression* of the *phenomena* of worldly affairs for clearness of evidence with respect to the objects themselves; than which nothing can be more distinct.

You perceive I can do nothing more, on this subject, than echo back your own sentiments, which are such as I have long maintained

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I wish it were in my power to throw some additional light on these intricate points, but I am utterly unable to do it. How far you can introduce any speculations of this sort into your philosophical works, with advantage, you are most competent to determine. It may, probably, have the good effect of admonishing sciolists that the pursuits of science, when conducted with a proper spirit, are not inimical to religious belief.

My health is, through unspeakable mercy, perfectly restored, excepting a good deal of the pain in my back. It will give me much pleasure to see you at Foulmire. Please to remember me affectionately to Mrs. Gregory.

I am, my dear friend, with ardent wishes for your temporal and eternal welfare,

Your affectionate Friend and Brother,
ROBERT HALL.

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## XV.

### TO WILLIAM HOLLICK, ESQ.

ON HIS RECOVERY FROM A SECOND ATTACK.

My dear Friend, *Feb.* 1, 1806.

Accept my sincere thanks for your kind letter. Every assurance of respect from old friends, and especially from one whose friendship has been so long tried, and evinced on so many occasions, must afford much satisfaction to a person in any situation. Though Providence has produced a separation, which will probably be of long continuance (and, in one sense, final), nothing, I am certain, can efface from my mind those impressions of gratitude and esteem with which I shall ever look back on my connexions at Cambridge and its vicinity. With the deepest submission, I wish to bow to the mandate of that awful, yet, I trust, paternal Power, which, when it pleases, confounds all human hopes, and lays us prostrate in the dust. It is for Him to dispose of his creatures as he pleases; and, if they be willing and obedient, to work out their happiness, though by methods the most painful and afflictive. His plans are infinitely extended, and his measures determined by views of that ultimate issue, that final result, which transcends our comprehension. It is with the sincerest gratitude I would acknowledge the goodness of God in restoring me. I am, as far as I can judge, as [remote] from any thing wild and irregular in the state of my mind as I ever was in my life; though I think, owing probably to the former increased excitation, I feel some abatement of vigour. My mind seems inert. During my affliction, I have not been entirely forsaken of God, nor left destitute of that calm trust in his providence which was requisite to support me: yet I have not been favoured with that intimate communion, and that delightful sense of his love, which I have enjoyed on former occasions. I have seldom been without a degree of composure, though I have had little consolation or joy. Such, with little variation, has been my mental state, very nearly from the time of my coming to the Fishponds; for I had not been here more than a fortnight before I found myself perfectly recovered, though my pulse continued too high. It has long subsided, and exhibits, the doctor assures me, every indication of confirmed health.

With respect to my future prospects and plans, they are necessarily in a state of great uncertainty. I am fully convinced of the propriety of relinquishing my pastoral charge at Cambridge, which I shall do, in

an official letter to the church, as soon as I leave Dr. Cox, which, I believe, will be at the expiration of the quarter from my coming. My return to Cambridgeshire was, I am convinced, extremely ill judged; nor had I the smallest intention of doing it, until I was acquainted with the generous interposition of my friends, to which it appeared to me that my declining to live among them would appear a most ungrateful return. I most earnestly request that they will do me the justice to believe, the intention I have named, of declining the pastoral charge, does not proceed from any such motive, but from the exigences of my situation, and a sense of duty. I propose to lay aside preaching for at least a twelvemonth.

Please to remember me affectionately and respectfully to your cousin, and all inquiring friends, as if named.

I am, my dear Sir,
Your affectionate and obliged Friend,
ROBERT HALL.

P.S.—Please to present my best respects to Mrs. Hollick and your daughter.

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## XVI.

### TO THE REV. JAMES PHILLIPS.

*Fishponds, Feb.* 15, 1806.

Since I have been here, another stroke has befallen me under which my heart is bleeding. This is the death of my dear and only brother, two years older than myself, who died about ten days since, without a moment's warning. He was reaching something from the chimney-piece, and instantly dropped down, and expired. He had been for some years truly religious, so that I entertain pleasing views respecting his eternal state, which is my only consolation. I feel poignant regret at not having treated him with more tenderness. I longed to have an opportunity of convincing him of the ardour of my affection; which makes me feel most painfully, that in losing him I have lost the human being of all others the most dear to my heart. I hear a voice, in this most affecting providence, speaking to me aloud, "Be thou also ready." 'I follow the dear deceased in his mysterious journey, and seem to stand on the very boundary that divides two worlds from each other, [while the] emptiness and vanity of every thing besides [God] is deeply impressed on my heart, my hopes, of an earthly kind, are extinguished. I feel my emptiness; but, O, I long to be filled. To be convinced of the vanity of the creature is, I know, the first step to happiness: but what can this avail, unless it be succeeded by a satisfying sense of the fulness and all-sufficiency of God! Through mercy, my health is perfectly restored.

## XVII.

### TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST OF THE BAPTIST PERSUASION IN CAMBRIDGE.

ON RESIGNING THE PASTORAL CHARGE.

My dear Brethren, *Leicester, March* 4, 1806.

A succession of afflictive dispensations has brought me to the resolution of resigning the pastoral office, which I have for a considerable number of years exercised among you.

I cannot reflect on the numberless and decisive proofs you have afforded me of your attachment during that period without the warmest gratitude; nor think of a final separation without regret. No people ever received the ministerial services of their pastor with more candour; or evinced, on every occasion, a greater solicitude to contribute to his happiness. It is not necessary to dwell at large on the circumstances which have determined me to relinquish the situation I have so long held. They are partly *local*, in the strictest sense of the word, and in part arise from my recent illness, which suggests the propriety of suspending the ministerial functions for the present.

The dissolution of that union which has subsisted with such uninterrupted harmony is the work of Providence, whose operations are often mysterious, but always infinitely wise and gracious. Permit me, my dear brethren, at parting with you, to express the deep and unalterable sense I shall ever feel of the candour, kindness, and generosity I have uniformly experienced at your hands. You will ever have a distinguished place in my affections and my prayers. It is my earnest prayer, that the truth it has been my humble endeavour to inculcate among you may take deeper and deeper root in your hearts and lives; that you may obey from the heart that form of doctrine into which you have been delivered. May our separation not be final and eternal; but may we be so preserved and sanctified, by the influence of divine grace, that, when the transitory days of our mortal pilgrimage are concluded, we may be permitted to spend a blissful eternity together! Let me make it my earnest request, that you will be careful to choose a minister whose heart is truly devoted to God, and who is determined, like the great apostle, "to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified."

That your faith may increase exceedingly, and your love one towards another abound more and more, till you arrive "at the fulness of the stature of perfect men in Christ," and are "presented before him unblameable in holiness," is the habitual and earnest prayer of

Your late unworthy Pastor,
And affectionate Friend,
ROBERT HALL.

## XVIII.

### THE BAPTIST CHURCH AT CAMBRIDGE TO THE REV. ROBERT HALL.*

IN REPLY TO THE PRECEDING.

Dear Brother,

Though your letter containing your resignation of the pastoral office among us had been expected, in consequence of an intimation previously communicated by you, it was received by us with deep regret; yet, we trust, in the spirit of humble submission to that all-wise Providence which has seen fit to dissolve the union that has so long and so happily subsisted between us. Be assured, you will ever hold a distinguished place in our most affectionate remembrances; nor shall we forget you in our mingled supplications at the footstool of divine Mercy. We hope ever to preserve a grateful recollection of your long and faithful services. We bear you witness, that the prevailing desire of your heart, and the constant object of your labours, was to disseminate among us the knowledge of the true God, and of Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent; and to fit us, by divine grace, for the enjoyment of a future world. And we pray that the important truths which you have so repeatedly and energetically inculcated may constantly be adhered to by us. In the loss of such a pastor we have sustained a deprivation of no common magnitude; but while we lament the painful separation which has taken place, we desire to mingle with feelings of sorrow on our own account those of sincere thanksgiving on yours. We rejoice that God has restored you: and we pray that your health and strength may long be preserved; and that He who appoints the bounds of our habitation will direct you to whatever place may be most conducive to your permanent health and happiness. As frequently as possible, we hope you will favour us with your friendly visits. The real and ardent friendship which subsists between us it is our sincere desire should continue through our mortal existence, and gather fresh

* These, and the two preceding letters to Mr. W. Hollick, will serve to correct the misstatement which has appeared in two or three periodical and other publications: "The intervention of malady separated him from a congregation which he had multiplied in number and elevated in character; and when he unexpectedly recovered, he found that his office was filled by another." Nothing can be more inaccurate than this assertion; nothing more unjust. The church and congregation, during Mr. Hall's separation from them in consequence of his indisposition, evinced the utmost solicitude on his account. They made arrangements to receive weekly communications as to his progress towards recovery; which were read publicly to the assembled congregation every Sunday. On the permanent dissolution of their connexion, to which the above letters so affectingly allude, they did not content themselves with bewailing his loss; but they exerted themselves most actively and successfully in raising a sufficient sum to purchase for him a handsome annuity, and otherwise to contribute effectually to his comfort. During the quarter of a century which intervened between his removal from Cambridge and his death, they continued to manifest for him the most cordial affection and the highest veneration. His periodical visits to them were seasons of real delight, diffusing (shall I say?) a gleam of pious hilarity and intellectual and spiritual refreshment over all. And more than once has Mr. Hall assured me, that every such visit produced the most unequivocal proofs of their undiminished esteem and friendship. I feel it due to my old and valued friends at Cambridge, a sense of whose kindness, intelligence, and excellence the lapse of nearly thirty years has not effaced, to record this my humble testimony to their delicately grateful and generous conduct towards their former invaluable pastor.—Ed.

strength by every future interview; and we feel no hesitation ...ev-ing, that it will survive the grave, and be perpetuated to imme...al ages.

In the choice of your successor we wish to be guided by the motives you recommend, and the principles you have so frequently inculcated; and we entreat an interest in your prayers, that the Great Head of the Church will supply us with one zealous for his honour, and qualified to feed the people of his charge with the bread of immortal life.

Now, dear brother, with the greatest affection, "we commend you to God, and to the good word of his grace."

Signed at the desire, and on behalf, of the whole church, this 16th day of March, 1806.

WILLIAM HOLLICK

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## XIX.

### TO MR. NEWTON BOSWORTH, CAMBRIDGE.

My dear Friend, *Leicester, August* 26, 1806.

My long silence will naturally surprise you, till you hear the reason of it. The box which contained your letter has remained at Bristol, unopened, till last week; nor did I receive your very kind favour until a few days since. This is the true state of the case, and must plead my apology for a silence which must otherwise appear so unkind and unnatural.

Permit me to express my acknowledgments for the expressions of regard contained in your letter, of the reality and warmth of which cannot entertain a moment's hesitation, as they are so perfectly in unison with every part of your conduct during all the years I have had the happiness of knowing you. Your congratulations on my recovery affect and humble me, as I am perfectly conscious of my not deserving the hundredth part of the esteem they imply. If my ministry has been at all blessed, as the means of spiritual good to your soul, God alone is entitled to the praise. I have been, in every sense of the word, an unprofitable servant. When I consider the value of souls, the preciousness of the blood of Christ, and the weight of eternal things, I am ashamed and astonished to think I could have spoken of such subjects with so little impression, and that I did not travail in birth more, till Christ was formed in my hearers. I have no plea for my negligence, no hope of pardon, but what is founded on that atonement and intercession I have endeavoured, though so very faintly, to recommend to others. Every fresh experience of life convinces me more and more of the truth and importance of the doctrines I have preached; and, blessed be God! I am sometimes favoured with some experimental taste of their sweetness. As often as I look back on such seasons, I am ready to exclaim,—

"Where can such sweetness be,
As I have tasted in thy love,
As I have found in thee?"

O, my dear friend, let us press towards the mark. *We* know where true happiness is to be found. Let the dead bury their dead; but let us follow Christ, and aspire, with an intense and increasing ardour, to the heavenly kingdom. Happy shall we be if we can habitually act as becomes those who are but a few steps from heaven.

I rejoice in your domestic felicity. May it long be continued, and, if possible, increased, without being permitted (and God can attemper all things) to abate your ardour after heavenly enjoyments.

Your account of the reception of Mr. Gregory's book on Mechanics gives me great pleasure. He

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thus affording a demonstration that the highest scientific attainments are by no means incompatible with the simplicity of the gospel. Please to remember me affectionately to him when you write. May God long preserve and bless him!

I thank you sincerely for your proffered assistance in packing up my books, which I shall probably shortly need; for I am tired of wandering, and propose soon to fix upon some place where I may have my books about me.

Remember me to Mrs. Bosworth, and all other friends, as if named Pray let me hear from you soon and often.

I am, dear Sir,
Yours most affectionately,
ROBERT HALL

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## XX.

### TO THE REV JAMES PHILLIPS.

My dear friend Phillips, *Leicester, Jan.* 2, 1807.

I ought long since to have written to you, but you know what a poor correspondent I am, and how reluctant to write letters. I feel myself much obliged by your kind favour. Your letter, like many things else in human life, contained a mixture of what excited melancholy with what produced pleasing emotions. The succession of calamitous accidents which befell our friends in your neighbourhood is truly singular and affecting. I am happy to hear every one of the sufferers is doing well. I hope it will have the right impression on their minds, by bringing them nearer [to God;] and they will have abundant occasion for thankfulness, even if their respective calamities had been worse. Present my kind and sympathizing respects to each of them, the first opportunity. Your account of Ireland interested me much. The state of the class of inhabitants you describe is truly

deplorable. I am afraid any attempts to remove their ignorance will have little success, unless some methods could be adopted at the same time to relieve their excessive poverty. There is a close connexion between the two. I suppose their poverty must be ascribed to the want of encouragement to industry afforded by the landed proprietors, and, perhaps, in some measure, to the hardihood of their constitution, which enables the Irish peasantry to subsist and multiply where a more feeble race would absolutely perish. You give no account of the lakes of Killarney, which, I understand, are singularly sublime and beautiful.

You are desirous of some information respecting my situation and intentions. I have not yet taken possession of my apartments at Enderby, having been detained at Leicester by the affliction of my sister and niece; the former is nearly recovered, the latter is not worse, and I intend to go to Enderby to-morrow or Monday at furthest. Enderby is a very pleasant village, about five miles from Leicester; it stands upon a hill, and commands a very pleasant and beautiful view. I am extremely pleased at the prospect of seeing you there in the spring. I hope nothing will occur to disappoint me. Be assured I shall do every thing in my power to make your visit pleasant. I have no immediate intention of coming to London: there are some friends there and in the vicinity it would give me much pleasure to see; but the bustle and hurry of London are little suited to my taste.

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But my times are in the hand of God; and my chief solicitude, if I do not greatly deceive myself, is to please him in all things, who is [entitled] to all my love, and infinitely more than all, if possible; and who is, indeed, my "covenant God and Father, in Christ Jesus." I do not at all regret my past afflictions, severe as they have been, but am persuaded [they] were wisely and mercifully ordered. I preach most Sabbaths, though at no one place statedly, and have found considerable pleasure in my work. I have little or no plan for the future, but endeavour to abandon myself entirely to the Divine direction. All I have to lament is the want of more nearness to God, and a heart more entirely filled with his love, and devoted to his service. Pray let me hear from you often: a letter from you never fails to give me a high degree of pleasure. Please to remember me affectionately and respectfully to Miss Wilkinson, and to Mr. Wilberforce, should you see him, and to Mr. Beddome's family, in all its branches.

I am, dear Sir,
Yours most affectionately,
ROBERT HALL.

Present my kind respects to Mrs. Phillips.

## XXI.

### TO THE REV. DR. COX.

Dear Sir, *Enderby, April* 26, 1807

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The lukewarmness of a part, the genteeler part of congregations, with respect to vital religion, is matter of grief to me. Many have the form of religion, while they are in a great measure destitute of the power of it. With respect to the excuses that this class are ready to make for neglecting private meetings, it might not be amiss to urge them to inquire whence the *indisposition* to devote a small portion of their time to religious exercises arises. If it spring from a secret alienation of heart from devotional exercises, or from a preference to the world, it affords a most melancholy indication of the state of the mind. It is surely a most pitiful apology for declining such services, that they are not commanded by the letter of the New Testament. Whoever says this virtually declares that he would never give any time to religion unless he were compelled. The New Testament is sparing in its injunctions of external or instrumental duties. But does it not warn, in a most awful manner, against the love of the world; enjoin fervour of spirit, deadness to the present state, and the directing all our actions solely to the glory of God? How these dispositions and principles can consist with an habitual reluctance to all social exercises of religion, except such as are absolutely and universally enjoined, I am at a loss to determine. If the real source and spring of the neglect of devotional exercises, whether social or private, be an estrangement from God, and attachment to the world, the pretences by which it is attempted to be justified only enhance its guilt.

With respect to the doctrine of election, I would state it in Scripture terms, and obviate the antinomian interpretation, by remarking that man, as man, is said *to be* chosen to obedience, *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, &c., and not on a foresight of his faith or obedience; as also that the distinction between true believers and others is often expressly ascribed to God. "*Thou* hast hid these things."—"To you it is *given* not only to believe," &c.—"As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." As the doctrine of election, however, occupies but a small part of the New Testament revelation, it should not, in my opinion, be made a prominent point in the Christian ministry. It is well to reserve it for the contemplation of Christians, as matter of humiliation and of awful joy; but, in addressing an audience on the general topics of religion, it is best perhaps to speak in a general strain. The gospel affords ample encouragement to all: its generous spirit and large invitations should not be cramped and fettered by the scrupulosity of system. The medium observed by Baxter and Howe is, in my opinion, far the most eligible on those points.

On the other subject you mention* I perceive no difficulty; none, I mean, to embarrass the mind of a minister. On a subject so awful and mysterious, what remains for us but to use the language of Scripture, without attempting to enter into any metaphysical subtleties, or daring to lower what appears to be its natural import? A faithful exhibition of the Scripture declarations on this subject must be adapted, under a Divine blessing, to produce the most awful and salutary effects.

With best wishes for your welfare,

I am, dear Sir,

Yours affectionately and sincerely,

ROBERT HALL.

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## XXII.

### TO THE REV. DR. RYLAND.

*Leicester, Dec.* 28, 1808.

* * * I hope you continue to enjoy much religious prosperity. The only comfortable reflection, in the present state of the world, is the apparent increase of the kingdom of Christ. His glory, his gospel, his grace, are, I hope, considerably advancing: and how little are all the revolutions of kingdoms when compared to this? We should rejoice in every event which seems to tend to that issue; and, on this account, I am more than reconciled to the recent intelligence from Spain. I long to see the strongholds demolished, and "every thing that exalteth" brought into subjection to Christ. How deep an infatuation blinds the counsels of Great Britain! How fatal may we fear the intimate alliance of this country with the papal power, which the vengeance of God has marked out for destruction! May the Lord bring good out of evil, and "fill the whole earth with his glory!"

I am now removed to Leicester, and find my situation, on the whole, very comfortable. The people are a simple-hearted, affectionate, praying people, to whom I preach with more pleasure than to the more refined audience at Cambridge. We have had, through great mercy, some small addition, and hope for more. Our meetings in general, our prayer-meetings in particular, are well attended. For myself, my mind and body are both much out of order; awful doubt and darkness hanging on the former, and much affliction and pain in the latter: let me, dear brother, entreat an interest in your prayers.

I am, my dear Brother,

Yours affectionately,

ROBERT HALL.

P.S.—In gratitude to God, and to my dear companion, I must add, that marriage has added (a little to my cares), *much* to my comfort, and that I am indulged with one of the best of wives.

* That of future punishment, I presume.—ED.

## XXIII.

### TO THE REV. JAMES PHILLIPS.

*Leicester, Feb.* 16, 1809.

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* * * * Rogers I have not yet found time to read through. I thank you for it, and am much pleased with the piety and spirit of it, as far as I have gone. I have read Zeal without Innovation with extreme disgust: it is written with shrewdness and ability; but is, in my esteem, a base, malicious, timeserving publication. It was lent me by Mr. Robinson, who, in common with all the serious clergy in these parts, disapproves it highly. I suppose the author wrote it to curry favour with such men as the . . . . . and to procure a living. His poverty is to be pitied; but I hope I would rather starve in a workhouse than be the author of such a book. I am afraid there is a party rising among the evangelical clergy, that will ruin the reformation which has been going on in the established church during the last forty or fifty years. * * *

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## XXIV.

### TO A FRIEND IN PERPLEXITY AS TO HIS RELIGIOUS STATE

Dear Sir, *Leicester, April* 20, 1809.

I am much concerned to learn the unhappy state of your mind respecting religion. You may depend upon no one seeing the letter but myself; and I wish it were in my power to say any thing that might be of use. Of this I have very little hope; for the adage might, in too great a degree, be applied to me—"Physician, heal thyself;" as I labour under much darkness and despondency respecting my religious prospects, through the prevalence of indwelling corruptions. Wha then, my dear sir, can I say to you, or to any other? I would recommend you, above all things, to have recourse to prayer—to fervent, importunate, persevering prayer. Take no denial: if you cannot pray long, pray often. Take the *utmost pains* in preparing your heart, and in the exercises of the closet; for surely an assurance of the forgiveness of sin, the light of God's Spirit, and the animating hope of glory are worth all the labour, and infinitely more than all, we are capable of using to attain them. They are heaven upon earth. From what I know by experience, though it is not with me now as in months past, the enjoyment of God throws every other enjoyment that

can be realized or conceived, at an infinite distance. Fix it in your mind, my dear friend, as a most *certain* truth, that there is nothing deserves to be pursued for a moment, but in *subordination to* God and *for* God; and then act accordingly, and you will probably soon find a strange change for the better. Exposed as you necessarily are to the society of many who have either no religion or feel but little of its vital power, you are in peculiar danger of forming slight ideas of its importance,—of being taught to look upon it as a *secondary* thing, an occasional law, whose authority is to be interposed, like the law of the land, to regulate other things,—instead of looking upon it as a vital, prevailing principle of the heart and life. Many, it is to be feared, never attain the blessings of religion, because they never form that estimate of its dignity which is consonant with the oracles of God. Did it not seem like presumption, I should earnestly recommend the daily perusal, besides the Scriptures (which I take it for granted you cannot omit), of some practical and experimental divinity. We have great store of it: Doddridge's Rise and Progress, his and Watts's Sermons, and above all, if I may speak from my own experience, the wonderful Howe—particularly his Blessedness of the Righteous, his Living Temple (the latter part), his Treatise on Delighting in God. Perhaps you will say you have not *time* for this; but here the question recurs again, What is of the most importance for a creature that is to live for ever—to be rich in this world, or to be rich towards God? I hope you will pardon the liberty I have taken, from a regard to the motive, which, you will do me the justice to believe, is pure and disinterested.

I remain, my dear Sir, yours affectionately,

ROBERT HALL.

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## XXV.

### TO THE SAME.

My dear Sir, *Leicester, July* 17, 1809.

I duly received yours. Be assured, I sympathize with you in your spiritual trials, having had a large share of them myself. I wish I could adopt the language of Dido to the Trojans throughout—"*Haud ignora mali miseris succurrere disco.*" The "*haud ignora mali*" is fully applicable to myself; but I am afraid I have not yet learned the art of suggesting what may be useful to others in similar circumstances. I want "the tongue of the learned, that I may be able to speak a word in season to him that is weary." I congratulate you on your retaining your religious sensibility: the most dangerous spiritual symptom is apathy, or a stupid indifference to our real situation. While we have feeling enough to complain, we give unequivocal indications of *life*; however disordered its functions, or languid its actions, may be. What

advice, my dear sir, can I possibly give you, but what your own good sense will suggest—that of *giving all diligence, and following on?* "Then," says the prophet, "shall ye know, if you *follow on* to know the Lord." Set a firm resolution against the indulgence of sin in any form. I know you too well to suspect external irregularities; but we are both fully convinced "the commandment is exceeding broad," and that, if we would walk in the light of God's blessed countenance, we must keep the heart with all diligence, or, as the expression signifies, "above all keeping." You will doubtless find your account in the serious, punctual, undeviating attention to private prayer, and reading of the Scriptures.

I feel a pleasing confidence that you are too much impressed with the importance of religion to suffer these exercises to be superseded by any worldly enjoyments, or to be attended to in a slight, perfunctory manner, resting in the *opus operatum*, instead of improving them as means of nearness to God, and growth in grace. Would it not be advisable for you to give yourself up publicly to the Lord? Might not your solemn engagement to be his, in the ties of a Christian profession, have a happy influence on the train of your sentiments and conduct, not to say, that if you truly love the Lord Jesus Christ, you must necessarily feel a desire to keep his commandments? I am glad to hear you are happy with Mrs. ——. Please to remember me affectionately to Mrs. ——, to ——'s family in all its branches, to Mr. ——, and all inquiring friends.

I am, dear Sir,
With great respect, yours, &c.
ROBERT HALL.

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## XXVI.

### TO THE REV. JAMES PHILLIPS.

My dear Friend, *Leicester, Sept.* 1, 1809.

Whether I owe you a letter, or you me, I cannot say; but this I know, that it seems a long time since I heard from you. My affection for you renders me uneasy under so long a silence, and makes me anxious to hear how you go on. The last letter you favoured me with gave me a pleasing account of your religious prosperity: your prospects in this respect are, I hope, brighter and brighter. Among the very elegant and polite part of your audience, you are too well acquainted with human nature to flatter yourself with *much* success; but you have been honoured as the instrument of drawing a considerable number of the poor and of the middling classes to a place where they had no thought of attending before. Here you will, in all probability, find your most favourable soil. I am sure you will cultivate it with care; and hope you will, under the blessing of God, reap an abundant harvest

Were we but more strongly and abidingly impressed with the value of immortal souls, with what godly simplicity, what earnestness, and what irresistible pathos should we address them! Perhaps the inequality of the effect produced by different preachers is to be ascribed more to the different degrees of benevolent and devotional feeling, than to any other cause. Job Orton remarks, in his Letters, that he knew a good man of very slender abilities, who was eminently useful in the conversion of souls; which was, in his opinion, to be ascribed chiefly to the peculiarly solemn manner in which he was accustomed to speak of divine things.

I had hoped to have seen you during the summer at Leicester, which would have been a very high gratification, as I know not when I shall reach London. I have no spirits for such an undertaking: my complicated afflictions have left me but half a man. The apprehension of mingled society, of being exposed to various sorts of company, is too formidable for me at present to surmount. I am severely and habitually afflicted with my old complaint: but have I any room to murmur?

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I am happy in my domestic connexion, being blessed with an affectionate, amiable woman, and a lovely little girl, about five months old. My dear wife enjoys a better state of health than for some time past; and the dear infant is quite well. We have lately enlarged our place of worship, and have the prospect of its being well filled. I hope we experience some little of the presence of the Lord in the midst of us. I beg to be most respectfully remembered to Miss Wilkinson, and to thank her for her very kind congratulations and good wishes on my marriage. Remember me also most affectionately to dear Mrs. P——, and to all inquiring friends; and pray let me hear from you very soon.

I am, dear Sir,

Your affectionate Friend and Brother,

ROBERT HALL

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## XXVII.

### TO EBENEZER FOSTER, ESQ., CAMBRIDGE.

Dear Sir, *Manchester, Nov.* 4, 1809.

I write this from Manchester, to which your letter was sent from Leicester. I am obliged to you for it. It gives me much pleasure to hear of the very flourishing state of the congregation; though I am concerned at the poor account you give me of Mr. Chase's health. I hope he will be speedily restored, and be continued as an extensive blessing among you. The prosperity of the kingdom of Christ is the most delightful object a real Christian can contemplate. May he speedily take "upon himself his great power and reign." I cannot

but indulge the belief that real Christianity is increasing in the world; and that what we perceive of this kind at present is but the dawn of a more glorious era, which will shortly arrive. The convulsed state of the world, and the limitation of popish power, announce the speedy accomplishment of prophecy, in the triumphant establishment of the kingdom of Christ. Wherever the gospel is preached, there is a disposition, unknown in former times, to attend upon it.

Poor M——! he has finished his career.

When we look back upon those who have been too much addicted to the love of the world, what a dream, what a vanity does it appear! how unworthy the supreme pursuit of a creature who is hastening to his final account! May we, my dear sir, be preserved from this fatal snare, and possess as though we possessed not.

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## XXVIII.

### TO THE REV. JOSIAH HILL.

Dear Sir, *Leicester, Jan.* 23, 1810.

I thank you for your kind letter. I am happy to hear you are so comfortably settled, and that God has provided you with a suitable companion, with whom I wish you may enjoy many years of felicity. As to the proposal you are so good as to urge, of my visiting Pembrokeshire next summer, it will be quite impracticable. I have one summer excursion in view already; and a visit to so remote a part would occupy far more time than it would be proper for me to be absent from Leicester. I have had, in a manner, a new congregation to form; so that any considerable absence is attended with serious inconvenience, as the people are, as yet, by no means compacted and consolidated. I consider it as the first duty of my life well to cultivate my own field, which is such at present as demands all my care: which I may say, with humble gratitude, it rewards, the Lord having, in various instances, set his seal to my poor labours. The congregation which I serve consists mostly of the poor, many of whom are, however, "rich in faith;" so that I can truly say I never found so much encouragement in my work as since I have been here. The effect of time, and of spirits broken by a series of afflictions, has been to make me very reluctant to travelling. Nothing but the claims of absolute duty can surmount that reluctance. My ambition is to spread the savour of the knowledge of Christ in the connexion where I am placed, content to leave the more enterprising and brilliant career of an evangelist to persons of more active and ardent minds. It would give me much satisfaction to meet my dear friend Phillips anywhere, and more especially under your hospitable roof. That pleasure, however, I must postpone till I go to London, or until he will favour me with a visit in

Leicestershire. I shall be always happy to see you, and to hear of your success and prosperity in your great work. Of this you say you can speak nothing at present. The congregation, I fear, from the character of its former pastor, has sunk into a very lethargic state. It will be your study and ambition, I am persuaded, to awaken them, and to recall them to the power of that religion which "makes all things new." Whatever speculative difficulties you may have felt, or may still feel, you can be at no loss to discover, that the warm and affectionate preaching of Christ crucified is the grand instrument of forming lively Christians. May you in this glorious attempt be abundantly honoured and blessed.

I return you my warmest thanks for every expression of esteem and affection with which you have honoured me, and remain, with sentiments of high esteem, dear Sir.

Your affectionate Brother,

ROBERT HALL.

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## XXIX.

### TO WILLIAM HOLLICK, ESQ.

ON THE DEATH OF MRS. HOLLICK.

My dear Friend, *Leicester, July* 6, 1810.

I sincerely sympathize with you in the heavy stroke with which your heavenly Father has seen fit to visit you in the removal of your dear partner, with whom you have so long trod the paths of this weary pilgrimage. I hope she has gone to eternal rest; and you, my dear friend, will, I trust, meet her in that world where no separation, no sorrow or sin will ever enter. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in him."

I have endeavoured already, and often shall, "to spread your case before the Lord," and to entreat him to support you under, and sanctify you by this dispensation. You have learned, my dear friend, the terms on which all earthly unions are formed; the ties on earth are not perpetual, and must be dissolved; and every enjoyment but that which is spiritual, every life but that which is "hid with Christ in God," is of short duration. Nothing here is given with an ultimate view to enjoyment, but for the purpose of trial, to prove us, and "to know what is in our hearts, and if we are upright before God, to do us good in the latter end." You had, no doubt, often anticipated such an event as the inevitable removal of one from the other; and I hope neither of you were wanting in making a due improvement of the solemn reflection, and laying up cordial for such an hour. Still I am well aware that the actual entrance of death into the domestic circle is unutterably

solemn, and places things in a different light from what we ever saw them in before. You seem, and it is with much pleasure I perceive it, fully aware, thoroughly apprized of the true improvement to be made of this heavy blow, which is undoubtedly intended to quicken your preparation for a future world. It loudly says to you, and to all, "Be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." God grant it may be eminently sanctified by weaning you more completely from this world, and "setting your affections" more entirely and habitually "on the things that are above." You will then, in the midst of that deep regret such a loss has necessarily inspired, have cause to bless God that you were afflicted.

We have been for some time in expectation of a visit from you. I hope you will not disappoint us, nor delay it long, as my dear wife expects in a very few months to be confined. We shall rejoice to see you, and shall be happy to contribute in some measure to your solace and relief. My wife, whose health is extremely delicate at best, and very often interrupted, desires to be most respectfully and affectionately remembered to you. Please to present my kindest and most sympathizing regards to your daughter, and love to inquiring friends.

I remain, dear sir, with best wishes and prayers,

Your affectionate and sympathizing Friend and Brother,

ROBERT HALL

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## XXX.

### TO R. FOSTER, JUN. ESQ., CAMBRIDGE.

My dear Sir, *Leicester, July* 12, 1811.

I thank you for your favour, enclosing a draught for 75*l.* 2*s.* 9*d.*, and am highly gratified with the genuine sentiments of piety contained in your letter. It has been a peculiar satisfaction to me, for a long time past, to hear of your decided attachment to the cause of God; and it is my earnest prayer that the life of God, which his grace has commenced, may flourish more, till it issues, as it infallibly will, in the fruit of eternal life. Go on, my dear sir, in the course you have begun; dare to be singularly good, and to follow Jesus "out of the camp, bearing his reproach"—a reproach that will be found "greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt." You are already the joy of good men, and a shining hope of the church, and it is impossible to calculate the eminent advantage you may be of to the interests of religion in the sphere where Providence has placed you.

Your admonitions I take in good part. I am not without a consciousness of my not having exerted my small abilities to the extent I ought in the cause of religion; but I find strange and seemingly insurmountable obstacles, arising in part from a certain fastidiousness of taste which renders me dissatisfied, and even disgusted, with all my

performances. My extreme ill state of health must also be taken into the account. I am seldom free from pain, which is often very severe

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I remain, my dear Sir,
Yours most affectionately,
ROBERT HALL

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## XXXI.

### TO JOSEPH GUTTERIDGE, ESQ., DENMARK HILL, CAMBERWELL.

My dear Sir. *Leicester, September* 16, 1811.

I have not relinquished my intention of publishing the substance of the sermon delivered at Prescott-street, though I think it will be most proper to print it in the form of a charge, in which it was first delivered. You may rest satisfied I shall not omit making mention of the occasion on which it was preached at Prescott-street, and embracing the opportunity of recommending, as far as lies in my power, the new institution to the attention and patronage of the religious public. The reason of the sermon not appearing sooner has been, principally, an almost uninterrupted struggle of painful discouragement arising from its appearing so contemptible under my hand.* The truth is, I am tormented with the desire of writing better than I can, and as this is an obstacle not easily overcome, I am afraid it will never be in my power to write much.

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## XXXII.

### FROM MR. GUTTERIDGE TO MR. HALL.

PROPOSING THAT HE SHOULD PREACH A SERIES OF LECTURES IN LONDON

Dear Sir,

I am now about to address you on the subject of our conversation when last at Denmark Hill. I then suggested to you the wishes of many friends that you would consent to visit London the following spring, and make arrangements for spending a longer time with us. Several persons have been inquiring if there were a probability of such an event being realized; but I did not wish to trouble you further on the subject till it became needful to do so.

* The sermon here referred to is that on the Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Minister.—ED.

My idea has been, that if you would spend six weeks at least with us, a course of lectures might be established, to be preached by you that, under a Divine blessing, without which all our efforts are vain, might be productive of much good at the present season. A course of lectures, say you;—on what subject? I reply, on any subjects that have a tendency to counteract the impiety and irreligion of the world in which we live: and surely you will admit this is latitude sufficient. I am aware that some objections will arise in your own mind. You will perhaps indignantly ask, "Does he think I will go to London to preach for money?" You may rely upon it, I have too much regard for you to wish you to do any thing that might even be interpreted to your discredit. But is it dishonourable in a man who has a family that have claims upon him to do that which may promote their comfort? Is the fair and honourable exercise of talent to be deprived of a suitable remuneration? Is not "the labourer worthy of his hire?" And although he who is called to preach the gospel is not to be actuated by motives of "filthy lucre," yet he is nowhere called to despise the cup of blessings that Providence may put into his hands, "who giveth us all things richly to enjoy." All this I am saying upon a presumption that your friends will cheerfully raise a subscription, of which you will know nothing, *save the contents.*

I should propose to obtain places of worship well adapted for evening lectures, probably one in the city and one on the other side Temple Bar; and that on the Lord's-day evening, and also one evening in the week, you might alternately preach there. This plan would leave your Sabbath mornings at liberty to oblige particular friends, or to supply destitute congregations; and in this respect I would propose to fix you to Prescott-street, if I dare. The time that appears to me most suited for the purpose would be the beginning of April; and then you would be in town through the missionary meetings. There is also, in the beginning of May, a most important service to be performed for the "Orphan School,"—*the only school* among Protestant dissenters where the children are *maintained* as well as *educated*, and which has been upon the decline, but is now, we hope, reviving. I should rejoice to see you become the advocate of so extensive and valuable an object; and if you fall in with my design, you will, I hope, undertake it. I hope Mrs. Hall and the children will come with you; you have friends who will be glad to take them in; but if you would prefer a lodging, we can, I doubt not, manage that to your satisfaction. Thus have I given you the outlines of a plan which is subject to any alterations you may propose. Let me beg you to take it into your serious consideration, and to send me soon a favourable answer.

I am, dear Sir, affectionately yours,

JOSEPH GUTTERIDGE

## XXXIII.

### TO JOSEPH GUTTERIDGE, ESQ.,

IN REPLY TO THE PRECEDING.

My dear Sir, *Leicester, Feb.* 29, 1812.

I have taken into my most serious consideration the proposition laid before me in your last letter, and have sought the advice of those friends whose opinion I judged most fit to be relied upon. Some of them are decided in favour of my compliance, others leave the matter in suspense. My people at Leicester have given their cheerful consent, on a supposition of its appearing to me to be the path of duty. Upon making it frequent matter of prayer, I am inclined to think it may be my duty to fall in with the ideas entertained by you and others upon this point, provided my health admit. The difficulties and discouragements attending the affair appear to me so formidable, that nothing could induce me for a moment to think of encountering them but an apprehension that I might, by yielding to them, be going against the will of God. I am habitually alarmed at the thought of my having already too much hid my little talent in a napkin, and should consequently rather risk the most unpleasant imputations than increase that score of guilt. It *ought* to be (alas! how weak my heart!) "a small thing with me to be judged by man's judgment: there is one that judgeth, even the Lord." The business, however prudently conducted, will expose me to the censure of pride and presumption on the part of many; and my deficiencies will disappoint, I am certain, the expectation of my partial friends. Nevertheless, supposing it possible some good may result, I am inclined to say, "I will go in the strength of the Lord my God." An impediment lies in the way, however, at present, which must be removed before I can think of it; that is, the state of my health. My old complaint has grown upon me so much of late, that it is with *great difficulty* I can go on with my stated work. I have been for some time under the necessity of taking fifty, and sometimes a hundred drops of laudanum every night, in order to procure any rest. The pain has been both violent and very nearly constant. It is quite out of the question to think of a journey to London unless I am better. So situated, whatever arrangements are made connected with the proposal you mention, must be *conditional;* and I shall, if you judge it fit to give it any further consideration, inform you previously whether I can come or not. It seems to me there are some objections to the *place* of preaching being alternate: will not this interfere with its being well known? The same objection seems to apply to the appointment of different places. These, however, and all other points, I wish to submit to the decision of friends. Mrs. H. will, I believe, not be able to accompany me. She desires to be most

respectfully remembered to you and Mrs. G. Please to present my best respects to Mrs. G. and Miss G., and believe me to be, with great esteem,

Dear Sir, yours affectionately,
ROBERT HALL.

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## XXXIV.

### TO JOSEPH GUTTERIDGE, ESQ.

ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

My dear Sir, *Leicester, March* 29, 1812.

I delayed writing to you as long as I could, that I might the better ascertain the state of my health at the time when it was proposed I should undertake my journey to London. I now feel myself under a necessity of informing you and my other friends, that my health is such as renders it impossible for me to think of engaging in such a matter. It is with the utmost difficulty that I can go through my stated duties. I am ready to suspect that the complaint under which I have so long laboured is intended to "weaken my strength by the way," and, at no great distance, to bring me to "the house appointed for all living." The pain is almost incessant, and often so violent as to put my patience to its utmost exercise.* I have now for many weeks been under the necessity of taking seventy or eighty drops of laudanum every night, and am often obliged to rise and repeat the draught before I can procure any rest. It appears to me preposterous to think of coming to London in such a situation. I can scarce ever sit up an hour together; lying down is my constant position. I consulted some judicious friends on the subject of your proposal, and, above all, made it my business to seek direction from the Fountain of wisdom The result was, that I came to a determination to suspend the affair upon the state of my health about the time my engagements, in the event of compliance, were to commence. Providence, by having placed me in my present circumstances, appears to have decided the affair; and in that decision I perfectly acquiesce. My mind is, to say the truth, relieved from a considerable weight; for nothing but a fear of neglecting a possible opportunity of doing some little good could have reconciled me for a moment to the proposal you, I am persuaded with the best intentions, were pleased to make. The appearance of vanity and self-consequence attached to it, always presented itself as a most formidable obstacle; but this I had made up my mind to surmount, reposing, in the midst of much sinister [interpretation,] on the rectitude of my intentions, and my conscious desire of complying with the leadings of Providence. You, my dear sir, have been actuated, I doubt not, in this affair, by a solicitude to promote the interest of reli-

* See p. 155, 156 of this volume.—ED.

gion, as well as by motives of the truest friendship, as far as concerns myself; and you will not fail to [reap] the satisfaction which arises from the possession of such sentiments. For the trouble you have been at in making the necessary arrangements, you will be so good as to accept my sincere acknowledgments.

With truest affection and esteem,
I remain, dear Sir,
Yours constantly,
ROBERT HALL.

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## XXXV.

### TO THE REV. JAMES PHILLIPS.

My dear Phillips, *Leicester, April* 16, 1812.

I was extremely gratified to hear once from you again; and if you knew how much pleasure it yields me to receive a letter from you, I flatter myself you would indulge me oftener. I have little to communicate that will be interesting to you, but could not let so affectionate an epistle lie by long unanswered. My state of health, I need not tell you, has long been extremely ill: it appears to me as if my constitution was breaking up; and I have little doubt, unless my malady takes a favourable turn, it will, ere it be long, reduce me to the dust. I am not better than my fathers: I am deeply conscious I am corrected less, yea, infinitely less, than my iniquities deserve. I hope I am more anxious to see my heavy affliction sanctified than removed. Whether it would be best for it to be removed may well be doubted: of the admirable benefits arising from sanctification, both in time and eternity, there can be no doubt. I presume the Lord sees I require more hammering and hewing than almost any other stone that was ever selected for his spiritual building, and that is the secret reason of his dealings with me. Let me be broken into a thousand pieces, if I may but be made up again, and formed by his hand for purposes of his mercy. I see more and more of the unspeakable blessedness of being made like God, and of becoming partaker of his holiness. I see it, I say, but I do not attain; or, at least, in so unspeakably small a degree, that I have every moment reason to be abased, and "repent in dust and ashes."

My ministry continues, through mercy, to be considerably blessed in awakening sinners. I cannot but hope the church and congregation are in a very promising state. We are in perfect harmony, and we have frequent additions. Last Lord's-day se'nnight I baptized thirteen, and others stand ready. Blessed be the Lord! My strain of preaching is considerably altered; much less elegant, but more intended for conviction, for awakening the conscience, and carrying home truths with power to the heart. Our congregation is plain and serious, with a sprinkling of genteel people; but none in the church: and, indeed, if

any saving fruit has been reaped from my ministry, it has been almost entirely among the middling and lower classes.

Yesterday we had our second jubilee anniversary of the Bible Society for Leicestershire, a happy harmonious meeting, with one little exception; on the church side, several clergymen spoke; but no dissenter. I augur the most glorious and important consequences from the Bible Society. I have just finished the perusal of Mr. Scott's answer to Bishop Tomline. He has demolished the bishop entirely. I find but little in Mr. Scott's views against which I can object. It is somewhat loosely written, but full of argument, instruction, and piety. There is a trait of egotism in the good man which had better been avoided. He quotes almost entirely from his own works. It is well for the bishop his rank excuses him from replying to it. He would make a miserable figure. I thank you for your favourable opinion of my discourse. It is flat; but if it be in the least adapted to do good, I ought to rest satisfied. I am much rejoiced to hear of your intention of visiting Leicester. You must spend a Sabbath with me. I heard Mr. —— twice, [as he passed] through Leicester: he is a young man of some talents, of a good deal of brilliancy, but miserably defective in simplicity. I am afraid a vicious taste is gaining ground, both among preachers and hearers: all glare and point, little to the understanding, and nothing to the heart. But my paper admonishes me to close, with my best respects to Mrs. Phillips, Miss W——, Mr. and Mrs. Beddome, &c., in which Mrs. H. joins me.

I remain, my dear Sir,
Your affectionate and constant Friend,
ROBERT HALL.

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## XXXVI.

### EXTRACT OF A LETTER TO MRS. ANGAS, NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE.

Dear Madam, *Leicester, May* 8, 1812.

Though I have nothing particular to communicate, I knew not how to let Mrs. O. proceed to Newcastle without dropping a line to acknowledge your kind letter, and present my gratitude for the interest you are pleased to take in my welfare. The esteem of the pious and excellent of the earth I always consider as a very distinguished privilege; though the possession of it is not unmingled with mortification at the consideration of my deserving it so little, and my perfect conviction, that did they know me more they would esteem me less. It ought to humble most persons to reflect, that for a large portion of the respect in which they are held, they are indebted to ignorance; to the necessary unacquaintance with each other's hearts. The Great Supreme is the only being from whom nothing is to be feared on this head; the only

one who may be safely trusted with the worst secrets of our hearts. "His mercy endureth for ever." He also is able, and only he, to correct the obliquities he discovers. The Leicester news you probably hear from other quarters. I go so little into society, that the report must be strong and loud which reaches me.

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## XXXVII.

### TO MR. NEWTON BOSWORTH, CAMBRIDGE.

My dear Sir, *Leicester, April* 23, 1813.

I am ashamed of not having earlier answered the kind letter I received from Mrs. B., for which I beg you will present my hearty acknowledgments. I must also thank you for your book on the Accidents of Life. It is a most entertaining production, and will, I hope, be extensively useful in preventing or remedying a large portion of human calamity. It is plainly dictated by the same spirit that breathed in a Howard and a Hanway, and will entitle you to a portion of their reward.

As I hope to see Cambridge in the course of this summer, you will not expect from me a very long letter. I recollect, with fervent gratitude, the kindness I there met with; mixed with much shame, to think it should have been lavished on such an undeserving object. When I recollect the course of my ministry at Cambridge, I feel continual matter of condemnation. "Do you preach better now, then?" you will perhaps say. In one respect I do not preach half so well:—I do not bestow near so much attention on my composition: but I trust I do insist on more interesting and evangelical topics. A greater savour of Jesus Christ does, I trust, breathe through my ministry, in which it was formerly greatly deficient.

But why do I speak so much of myself?—We last Monday held our annual [meeting of the] Bible Society. It was more numerously attended than ever, and delightful to see clergymen and dissenting ministers sit on the same seat, and ardently engaged in promoting the same object, with perfect unanimity. We cannot say of the past times that they were better than the present. I think the age is greatly improving: it must improve in proportion as the grand catholicon is more universally applied. * * *

It would have given me great pleasure to have seen you this summer at Leicester: I am sorry your letter indicates no intention of that sort.

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I am much delighted with reading a new translation of Mosheim's Commentaries on the Affairs of the Christians before Constantine. It appears to me one of the most instructive theological publications that

has appeared for a multitude of years. With kind remembrances to Mrs. B. and all inquiring friends.

I remain, my dear Sir,
Your affectionate Friend,
ROBERT HALL.

P.S.—We have had an irreparable loss in the removal of dear Mr. Robinson. It has been a most affecting event, and has left a chasm which can *never* be filled up. Last Wednesday I endeavoured to improve the event by a suitable discourse.

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## XXXVIII.

[When Mr. Hall visited Cambridge, in the summer of 1813, he preached a sermon to the young persons belonging to the congregation there with which he had formerly been connected. The next day they assembled, and addressed to him a letter of thanks, to which the following is his reply:—]

To my young Friends of Mr. Edmond's congregation:

My dear young Friends,

I feel greatly obliged to you for your very affectionate testimony of your esteem, and rejoice to find my feeble attempts to impress religious sentiments were not altogether without effect. Your letter breathes a spirit of unaffected piety, which it is impossible to witness without emotion. I hope the Lord will enable you to persevere, and that, "being planted in the house of the Lord, you will flourish in the courts of your God, and bring forth fruit even to old age." Be sober, be vigilant; watch closely over your own hearts, and be much in earnest supplication to the Fountain of grace. Bless God, for having inclined your hearts to seek him; and doubt not that he will most graciously afford all the succour necessary to enable you to finish your course with joy.

That you may very greatly profit by the means of grace with which you are favoured, and become the joy of your parents, the hope of your minister, and great examples of pure and undefiled religion, is the earnest prayer of,

My dear young Friends,
Your affectionate Brother,
ROBERT HALL.

## XXXIX.

### EXTRACT FROM A LETTER TO THE REV. W. BUTTON

Dear Sir, *Leicester, Oct.* 25, 1813.

I have taken into consideration the proposal you have made. I know not what to say to it. If I shall part with the copyright of the little tracts, it may be, possibly, an injury to my family, and put it out of their power to publish a complete edition. Your proposal is very handsome; but this is one of my objections to it. Another is, it is so long since the tracts made their appearance, and several so short, and their subjects so miscellaneous, that I am afraid it will have an ostentatious appearance. I hate the appearance of vanity: I have so much of it in my heart, that I am ashamed it should display itself to the eyes of the world. As to my sermon, I am doing something to it at intervals. I have, indeed, nearly written it out in the rough, but I am so much disgusted with it, as usual, that I can by no means let it appear, unless it is in my power greatly to improve it.*

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## XL.

### TO THE REV. JAMES PHILLIPS, CLAPHAM.

ON OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF HIS OWN SON.

My dear Friend, *Leicester, Feb.* 28, 1814.

I am greatly obliged to you for your kind and consolatory letter, replete with those topics whence alone true consolation can be deduced. The stroke has been very severely felt by us both, but certainly most by dear Mrs. Hall. She was dotingly fond of our lovely boy. For my own part, I was not at all aware my affection for him was so strong until he was removed from us; my anguish was then great. It seemed to me as if I felt more on this occasion than I should at the loss of either of my others. This feeling, I suspect, was delusive, and arises from our being incapable of estimating the strength of our attachment to any object till it is removed. I was disappointed in his being a boy; for, [recollecting] my own extreme and portentous wickedness, I fancied there was something in the constitution of boys peculiarly tending to vice, and adverse to their spiritual interests. I had also remarked that females seemed much more susceptible of religious impressions than

* The sermon here alluded to was never published.

men. On these accounts I trembled for his salvation, and did not feel that gratitude for the blessing vouchsafed me which I ought. I suspect I greatly displeased God by my distrust of his goodness, and that he saw it meet to adopt this method of chastising me. May it be sanctified as a means of making me humble, heavenly, and submissive. It is a very solemn consideration, that a part of myself is in eternity; in the presence, I trust, of the Saviour. How awful will it be, should the branch be saved and the stock perish!

Pray for me, my dear friend, that this may not be the case; but that I may be truly sanctified, and permitted to walk in the fear of the Lord, and in the consolations of the Holy Ghost.

Mrs. Hall has been very ill, occasioned in a good measure by the shock she has received, but is better. She is looking forward, with considerable anxiety, to her confinement, which she expects in less than three months. She is so extremely weak and delicate, that I have very painful apprehensions respecting the issue. My *wish* and endeavour is to leave her, myself, and my dear children, in the hands of God. But how difficult it is to do so! Let me, once more, entreat an interest in your prayers.

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## XLI.

### TO THE REV. W. BUTTON.

My dear Sir, *Leicester, Feb.* 3, 1815.

I am much concerned to hear of your disorder in your eyes: it is, indeed, a great affliction, and demands the exercise of much submission to the wise Disposer of all events. I am afraid it has had, and will have, a great effect in depressing your spirits. Remember, my dear brother, the Lord means to do you good by all his several dispensations. He has already given you his Son; and how "shall he not with him freely give you all things?" He has conferred upon you spiritual discernment and heavenly light: how infinitely more important than the "light of the body," which in all eyes must soon be darkened! I hope, however, if it is a cataract, you may get relief; that is a disease which, I understand, has frequently been cured. Say, then, my dear friend, with David, "Why art thou thus disquieted within me? I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God." It will be, and has been, my habitual prayer that you may be strengthened, comforted, and relieved.

With respect to the reviewing Mr. ——'s sermon, I must be excused. I have entirely done with reviewing: it is an occupation, of all others, I dislike, and shall entirely give it up. If you wish me to publish, you should never wish me to review; for you are not aware what a serious interruption it is. I compose very slowly; and what I have

written in the Review has been a very great interruption. I have read Mr. ——'s sermon with much pleasure; it is judicious, serious, and affecting: but I am well aware how extravagantly his friends at ——— have always overrated his talents; and were I to review, and express myself in such terms only as the occasion would justify, I should mortify, instead of gratify. In truth, reviewing at the request of particular friends is a snare for the conscience. I never wished any person to review for me.

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## XLII.

### TO THE REV. DR. FLETCHER OF BLACKBURN,

NOW OF STEPNEY.

Dear Sir, *Leicester, Feb.* 21, 1815.

I duly received the five-pound bill which your friend has been so kind as to appropriate to the Baptist Mission. He may depend upon its being faithfully applied to the purpose for which it is intended; and you will be so good as to thank him in my name for it.

I most sincerely beg your pardon for not having replied to your kind letter: the truth is, not sitting down to reply to it immediately, the impression I had upon my mind afterward was, that you did not wish or expect me to reply. I recollected only that it contained a pretty pressing remonstrance with me for not publishing more; a subject on which I have often been urged, much to my concern and vexation. It pains me, my dear sir, to be condemned and reproached upon a subject which is sometimes a source of more internal uneasiness than is generally supposed. I am far from being satisfied with my own conduct in this particular, but know not how to remedy it. It is not indolence, I can truly say, which prevents me; but a certain fastidiousness and difficulty of being pleased, which really rises to the magnitude of a mental disease.

I feel myself, in all my performances, so short of that standard which I have formed in my own mind, that I can truly say I contemplate my little productions with a kind of horror. If I could dismiss this feeling, I should much oftener try the patience of the public. That what I have written meets with your approbation cannot fail to encourage me; it is "*laudari a viro laudato*:" but permit me to express my surprise that you should express yourself in terms so extremely disproportioned to my merits.

I shall be happy to hear from you, whenever you are disposed to write; and remain,

Dear Sir, with high esteem,
Your affectionate Friend,
ROBERT HALL.

## XLIII.

### TO THE REV. DR. FLETCHER.

Dear Sir, . *Leicester, May* 26, 1815.

With respect to Mr. Fuller's last moments, I have very little to communicate. His complaint was of a nature that left him very little opportunity of conversing with ease and composure. He was oppressed with a prodigious load of corporeal misery. He said, I believe, more than once, "All misery centres in me, and I cannot die." In a letter he dictated to Dr. Ryland a few days before his death, he expressed himself thus:—"My state of mind is, in one word, this; no despondency, no raptures." He said to his friends, he felt that trust in Christ, that he could plunge into eternity. He was a prodigious sufferer during his last illness. He said to Dr. Ryland, "I have written much, and said much, against the abuse of the doctrine of grace; but that doctrine is all my support in the prospect of eternity. I have no hope of being saved, but through the free sovereign grace of God, flowing through the atonement of Christ." I recollect nothing very particular respecting his first introduction into the ministry. Dr Ryland will, I believe, compile a pretty extensive memoir of him. He has been strongly urged so to do. He was in many respects the most memorable man it has ever been my happiness to know; and his loss will be deplored as irreparable. He possessed good sense in a more perfect degree than any person I ever knew, embraced every object with a clearness, facility, and precision almost peculiar to himself. He certainly possessed genius in a very high degree; but it was more a modification of intellect than a vigour of imagination; though in the latter faculty he was not defective. I loved and esteemed him more than I can express; and how his loss can be supplied in the mission I am at an utter loss to conjecture. But God is all-sufficient. Let me entreat your prayers to God that he would provide. I feel much gratified at your intention of improving the death of our most lamented and venerable friend. Wishing you much of the blessing of God in your important engagements, and begging to be remembered to Mrs. F., though unknown,

I remain, dear Sir,
Your affectionate Friend and Brother,
ROBERT HALL.

## XLIV.

### TO DR. RYLAND.

My dear Brother, *Leicester, June* 17, 1815.

I am sorry you should continue to importune me about that wretched oration, which it is my *unalterable* resolution never to print. It was not fit to be delivered, much less to be presented from the press. I may be mistaken: but I always conceive that it is a respect due to the public, whenever we appear before them, to do our best; and not to put them off with the weakly or more deformed part of our intellectual progeny. I laboured under an extreme depression of spirits; I was perplexed, between an imperfect written composition, a sort of funeral sermon delivered the last Sunday, and an attempt at extempore speaking. It would neither be respectful to Mr. Fuller nor to the public, nor justice to myself, to publish such a wretched piece of inanity. In delivering the oration at all, I performed a service for which scarce any money would have bribed me; but to have the publication of it demanded, under pain of the displeasure of Mr. Fuller's friends, is intrenching rather too much upon the independence of private judgment. Do not understand me, my dear sir, as at all displeased with you for urging the matter: I am speaking only upon the *supposition* that Mr. Fuller's family or friends demand the publication.

As you have intimated a willingness to publish memoirs, I would strongly recommend publishing neither the sermon nor the oration. They are utterly unnecessary if the memoirs are published; not only so, but they would stand in each other's way. When a biography is promised, it is not, I think, usual for the same person to publish a funeral sermon previously. It is slaking the public curiosity prematurely. If you persist in your intention of publishing memoirs, I should feel no objection to taking an opportunity of testifying my profound esteem and friendship for dear Mr. Fuller, in some form which you may deem most eligible; but let me, my dear sir, hear no more of the oration. My resolution is unalterable upon that subject.

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* * * As far as my acquaintance with sober Calvinists extends, they do not object to the doctrine of disinterested love, so much as to the naked and abstracted form in which some of the American divines have presented it. A portion of love to God, resulting from a spiritual perception of his intrinsic beauty, enters, I have no doubt, into the essence of true religion; but some of the Americans have given a prominence to this subject, as appears to me, beyond what exists in Scripture.

My work on mixed communion will be out, I trust, in about a fortnight. It is written, I hope, in a Christian spirit, and is calculated to do good rather than harm. I am most perfectly convinced that the

Baptist sentiments will never prevail upon the opposite system. My sincere wish is, that truth and candour may be promoted in the church.

I remain,
Your affectionate Brother,
ROBERT HALL

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## XLV.

### TO MR. JOSIAH CONDER.

Dear Sir, *Leicester, Sept.* 1815.

I owe you many apologies for not sooner noticing the letter you were so good as to address to me a considerable time since. The only reason I can plead for my silence is, the pain it necessarily gives me to put a negative upon wishes warmly and, as I believe, sincerely expressed. After having so frequently stated my repugnance to writing reviews, I feel myself at an utter loss to express the same sentiment in terms more strong or more efficacious. There is no kind of literary exertion to which I have an equal aversion, by many degrees; and, were such things determined by choice, it is my deliberate opinion I should prefer going out of the world by any tolerable mode of death, rather than incur the necessity of writing three or four articles in a year. I must therefore beg and entreat I may not be urged again upon a subject so ineffably repugnant to all the sentiments of my heart.

From what I have seen of the recent execution of the work especially, I am convinced my assistance is not in the least needed. It is, I believe, growing daily in reputation, and I hope in circulation; and I have no doubt but that, under your skilful management, and that of your coadjutors, its reputation will not only be sustained, but will be sufficient to engage far superior assistance to mine. I admire the Bible Society inexpressibly: but how is it possible to say any thing in its praise or vindication, which has not been said a thousand times; or where would be the safety of depicting in their true colours, the character and conduct of that whited sepulchre? Besides, let me add, my dear sir, that my other engagements are such, that the business of reviewing is incompatible with them, unless I were to form the resolution of having nothing to do with the press, or others for me. I feel myself much honoured by the expression of your kind regard, and beg leave to assure you that I am, with the truest esteem,

Your sincere Friend,
And obedient Servant,
ROBERT HALL

## XLVI.

### TO THE REV. W. CHAPLIN, BISHOP STORTFORD.

My dear Sir, *Leicester, Monday, Sept.* 22, 1815.

I hope you will excuse my neglect in not replying to your very kind invitation. I designed fully to reply to it without delay; but one circumstance occurred after another, in that busy scene, to occasion delay until it was too late. It would have given me, I flatter myself, at least as much pleasure as to yourself, to have proceeded to Stortford, and spent a day or two there. I shall ever retain a lively and grateful impression of the happy hours I have passed at Stortford, and of the distinguished politeness and attention on your part, which have chiefly contributed to render them so. But the fact is, while I am at Cambridge, the present claimants upon my time are so numerous, that, unless I could considerably protract my stay, I find it next to impossible to make excursions to any considerable distance.

Providence has so disposed the bounds of our habitation, as to preclude that intercourse which I can truly say I frequently recall, but never without emotions of warm affection and gratitude. Nothing but death will efface from my recollection and heart the manly sense, the dignified politeness, and Christian piety which have so frequently rendered your conversation so delightful. I rejoice to hear of your health, and prosperity, and usefulness; and that dear Mrs. Chaplin is spared to you. I bless God, that though we are separate for a time in the flesh, we are, I trust, joined in the Spirit, and permitted to make mention of each other in our prayers; and shall shortly, I humbly hope, be allowed to spend an eternity together. I often think with much emotion of our dear and venerable friend and father, Mr. Palmer. I feel that I have lost a rock in him: the loss of no man in that period of life would have affected me in any proportionable degree. But, alas! I shall probably soon follow him; and it becomes us, it becomes me at least at my age, to make it my great concern that my own death may be holy. *Inter nos*, I could have wished the character of our dear friend by Mr. Toller had been a little heightened and warmer coloured. It is like a portrait that is not very defective in likeness, but has lain long in a damp place. There is one thing in your letter which gives me sincere pleasure, which is, that you have sometimes thought of favouring me with a visit at Leicester. Let it not be one of those schemes that die in thinking of. We have a spare bed, and such accommodations as are indeed very inadequate to what you are accustomed to, but such as I flatter myself you will put up with. Be assured, there is no person it would give me more pleasure to see under my roof than Mr. Chaplin, accompanied with Mrs. C. We will divide the labour of the Sabbath.

I am, my dear Sir, with high esteem,

Yours most affectionately,

ROBERT HALL.

## XLVII

### TO DR. RYLAND.

My dear Sir, *Leicester, Oct.* 25, 1815.

I have availed myself of the opportunity of returning your manuscript by Mr. James. I am much pleased with it, as far as it has proceeded, and, judging from this specimen, have no doubt it will give satisfaction to the friends of our invaluable deceased brother, as well as the religious public at large. I found the whole narrative respecting his child and his first wife exceedingly affecting and interesting. I think you have done right in retaining it, as it sets his domestic character in a most pleasing light. It shows how perfectly compatible is great tenderness of heart and an attention to minuter duties, with great powers of intellect and an ardent pursuit of great objects. Biographers have usually been too sparing of such details. How delighted should we have been with such an exhibition of the characters of Edwards, Howe, and other illustrious Christian heroes! ——— has written to Mrs. B., earnestly importuning me to review his Life of Mr. Fuller, which is completed to the last chapter. I need scarcely say that I absolutely declined, informing him that it was impossible for me to do it, without a violation of honour and consistency. I suppose his book will be out shortly. I hope and believe, however, it will not prevent your work from obtaining a considerable circulation. Though I highly disapprove of ———'s publication, it is not impossible that posterity may obtain a juster idea of the character of our excellent friend by comparing them, than by either of them separately. I am afraid my dear brother will be as sparing of his shades as he of his lights. Though his [Mr. Fuller's] faults were trivial indeed compared to his excellences, yet they were in my view very apparent; and, as is generally the case in very forcible characters, they possessed a certain prominence: on the whole, however, it will be long before we look on such a man.

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## XLVIII.

### EXTRACT FROM A LETTER TO THE REV. W. BUTTON.

*Leicester, Jan.* 1816.

When you see Mr. Ivimey, will you be so good as to give my kind respects to him, and thanks to him for his kind attention, and that of his fellow-editors. Tell him I shall take his suggestion into serious consideration; but whether I shall contribute to the [magazine] or not, I cannot say. I never yet felt the smallest inclination to read or to

write in these sorts of miscellanies. With respect to the widows, anxious as I should be to promote their welfare, I have not the presumption to imagine my writing would be of any material benefit. To the whole class of publications, reviews, magazines, &c., I avow myself a total alien and a stranger.

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## XLIX.

### TO THE REV. THOMAS GRINFIELD, CLIFTON.

Rev. and dear Sir, *Leicester, Feb.* 5, 1816.

With respect to the salvability of Socinians, for myself I feel no hesitation. Their state appears to be clearly decided by such Scriptures as these: "He that *seeth* the Son, and *believeth* on him, shall have everlasting life;" "He that *hath* the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life." How can they be said to have the Son, who reject him in his distinguishing, his essential character, as the *Saviour* of the world; and how can he be a propitiation for sin to them who have no faith in his blood? When it is asserted that we are justified by faith, I can understand it in no other sense than that we are justified by a penitential reliance on his blood and righteousness. In rejecting the most fundamental doctrine of the gospel, the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, they appear to me to deny the very essence of Christianity. Their system is naturalism, not the evangelical system; and therefore, much as I esteem many individuals among them, I feel myself necessitated to look upon them in the same state, with respect to salvation, as professed infidels.

I am concerned, truly concerned, to find you speaking in terms so extremely disproportioned to my merits. While I feel myself gratified by the esteem of the pious and the able, praise so intemperate, I must confess, brings to my mind most forcibly the mortifying recollection of my own deficiencies.

I remain, with much esteem,
Your obliged Friend and Servant,
ROBERT HALL.

## L.

### TO DR. RYLAND.

*Leicester, April* 10, 1816.

My esteem for your character is such, that it is impossible for me to differ from you in opinion, or decline complying with your wishes without considerable pain. I feel that pain on the present occasion. I am truly concerned to find your purpose is to form an auxiliary society at Bristol, to have public days, &c. &c.; being deeply convinced of the truth of that axiom of our Lord's, that. "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation;" or, as Campbell translates it, "is not ushered in with parade." The Baptist Society has prospered abundantly, with the blessing of God, under a different management; and the unobtrusive modesty of its operations has been one of its strongest recommendations. That society has done much, and said little; it has shown itself in its effects, not in its preparations. I am much grieved that it is about to relinquish that praise, and to vie with [others] in the noise and ostentation of its proceedings. It reminds me of the fable of the frog and the ox. * * * * * *

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* * Why should we at last imitate what we have so long condemned? Why should we attempt a competition in a point of view in which we are sure to appear to a disadvantage? The expense of collecting ministers from remote places is not small; and, supposing their expenses to be borne out of the public fund (and the situation of few allows them to travel at their own expense), it will, I fear, more than counterbalance the pecuniary advantages resulting from the efforts at publicity. I have serious apprehensions that the ostentatious spirit which is fast pervading all denominations of Christians, in the present times, in the concerns of religion, will draw down the frown of the Great Head of the church, whose distinguishing characteristic was humility. He did "not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street." I am persuaded nothing can be more opposite to *your own* disposition than such a mode of proceeding, on which account I am the more surprised you should be induced to lend it your sanction. There appears to me a very simple and efficacious mode of supporting the Baptist mission, without noisy appeals to the public. Let every Baptist minister make an annual collection in his congregation, and apply to his more opulent members and hearers besides, for their annual subscriptions; and all the money will be raised which ought to be raised by our denomination. With respect to others, the success of the mission, attested by its periodical reports, will not fail to make the right impression. The best auxiliary societies, in my humble opinion, that can be devised, are already prepared to our hands in regular organized churches, and in the certainty of meeting some hundreds of professing Christians every Sabbath-day. I hope, my

dear brother, you will not be offended with the freedom of these remarks. Were I to consult my inclinations, an excursion, in the pleasant month of July, to Bristol and to Wales would be highly gratifying; but, from the consideration I have suggested, I must beg leave absolutely to decline your kind invitation. I do extremely deprecate the precedent about to be set at Bristol.

Your advice respecting my intended publication came too late. It was already in the press. I hope it will do no harm, if it does no good. I think the question of very considerable importance, and the abetters of free communion have been too languid in their exertions. I intend, my dear sir, no personal reflection, but mention it as a general remark.

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## LI.

### TO DR. RYLAND.

*Leicester, May* 27, 1816.

* * * I read the letters of Mr. Fuller on Robinsonianism, with much delight and approbation on the whole; but I think he has, as he was rather prone, carried the matter too far. For my part, I am far from believing the innocence of mental error on the one hand, or the *sinfulness* of every particular error on the other. I suspect that there are religious mistakes, which result from the circumstances and the imperfections of the present state, for which many good [men] will never be called to account; though I am far from supposing this extends to a denial of the great distinguishing principles of the gospel. On this occasion I am disposed to adopt the old adage, *In medio tutissimus ibis*. The letters are admirable for their piety, and their masculine vein of reasoning.

With respect to Scotland, I must absolutely decline it. I have been already five weeks absent from my pulpit on account of illness; and it would be extremely injurious to my congregation to incur so long an additional absence. In truth, I am little fitted for distant excursions, on account of my liability to be attacked with such violent pain, which renders me a burden to myself and to all about me.

## LII.

### TO DR. RYLAND. (EXTRACT.)

*June* 19, 1816

* * * I sympathize most sincerely in the joy you must feel, as a parent, from the baptism of your daughter. I hope and pray you will ultimately have the pleasure of seeing all your children walking in the truth. I already begin to feel the spiritual interests of my dear children a frequent source of painful solicitude. Let me beg an interest in your prayers for their conversion.

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## LIII.

### TO THE REV. JAMES PHILLIPS.

My dear Friend Phillips, *Leicester, May* 12, 1816.

It is long, very long, since I had the pleasure of seeing or hearing from you. For the latter I can account, in some measure, from the displeasure you conceived at my treatment of your servant, who, at your request, called upon me in the way to Harborough. I do freely confess myself to have been much to blame in that particular. My conduct was not such as ought to have been shown to any one; much less to a domestic of yours, who called, at your request, to make friendly inquiries respecting my welfare. I sincerely beg your pardon, and also the pardon of the young woman, for that impropriety. In justice to myself, I must tell you how I was situated. When your servant called I was engaged in secret prayer, the door made fast. My servant girl made a violent clamour at the door: I kept silence, intending her to understand that it was my wish not to be interrupted at that time. She continued, however, to knock at the door, as though she was determined to break it down. At length, I was under the necessity, fearing some accident, to open it; and being much irritated at the unwelcome interruption, and at the rude carriage of my servant, when I came to understand the errand on which the young woman came, I could not surmount my agitation sufficiently to give her the reception I ought. I was visibly pettish and chagrined. Such is the true state of the case; and I may observe, as some apology for me, that sometimes the incessant interruptions I meet with, by people calling from a distance, is such, especially in summer, as to leave no time at all, sometimes not half an hour a day, that I can call my own. This operating upon a mind fond of retirement to an excess, sometimes almost drives me to distraction. The irritation and agitation it sometimes produces is inconceivable. I do most devoutly wish my friends

would never give any commission to strangers to call upon me. The sight of strangers, especially when I cannot leave them when I please, is frequently distressing to me in a very [high] degree. But, though I mention these circumstances as an apology, I am far from meaning to justify myself. I am aware of the extreme impropriety of indulging that irritability of temper, and am truly concerned at the instance of it to which I have adverted. Let me indulge the hope, my dear friend, that this disagreeable circumstance will not put a period to that friendship which I have always so highly esteemed, and which has formed no inconsiderable part of the solace of my life. I have loved you ever since I knew you; and my attachment has increased exactly in proportion to my opportunities of acquainting myself with your character. I hope you will forget and overlook this unpleasant business, and permit me again to class you among my dearest friends.

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## LIV.

### TO DR. GREGORY.

ON THE DEATH OF MR. BOSWELL BRANDON BEDDOME.

My very dear Friend, *Leicester, Nov.* 2, 1816.

I have just received your letter, and cannot lose a moment in expressing the deep sympathy I take in the affliction arising from the melancholy tidings it announces. Alas! my dear friend Boswell Beddome! My eyes will see thee no more! The place which once knew thee shall know thee no more! How many delightful hours have I spent in thy society—hours never more to return! That countenance, beaming with benevolence and friendship, will be beheld no more until the resurrection morn, when it will rise to shine radiant with immortal brightness and beauty. How thick and solemn the vicissitudes of death and calamity in that amiable and respectable family, the Beddomes! What awful reverses and catastrophes! Surely their heavenly Father must have destined them to some distinguished station in the eternal edifice, with whom he has taken such pains in hewing, cutting, and polishing. The dealings of God towards our dear Boswell have been at once severe and tender; and never perhaps were the preparations of mercy to be traced more distinctly than in the events which have recently befallen him: the faculties extinguished for a while, to be restored; an antedated resurrection; as though God had determined to recast his whole nature into a crucible, previous to its being poured into the mould of eternity. I have been delighted to hear, from various quarters, and particularly from Mr. Alexander, of the sweet, tranquil, and devotional state of his mind subsequent to his first attack; and had flattered myself with the hope of life being protracted to a distant period. But God's ways are not as our ways; nor his thoughts as

our thoughts. After purifying our dear friend in the furnace of afflic tion, he judged it fit to cut short his work in righteousness. Be assured, my dear sir, I deeply sympathize with you, and dear Mrs. G., both in your sorrow and your joy, on the present occasion. You have to sing of mercy and of judgment. The loss of such a parent must be long and deeply regretted; but there is so much to console and to elevate in this event, taken in all its bearings, that the tears you shed partake of a tender triumph. Our dear friend has reached the goal, and gained the prize, which we are still doomed to pursue with anxiety and toil. May we, my dear friend, be quickened in our progress by this most impressive event, and learn, more effectually than ever, to secure the one thing needful.

Your company at Leicester, and that of Mrs. G., would afford me the most exquisite pleasure: pray let me have it the first opportunity. My health, through mercy, and that of my family, are at present good; though I have during the past year met with awful mementoes of my latter end.

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I beg to be most affectionately remembered to Mrs. Gregory, and every branch of the Beddome family, in which Mrs. Hall joins me; and remain, invariably,

Yours most affectionately,

ROBERT HALL.

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## LV.

### TO THE REV. THOMAS LANGDON, LEEDS.

My dear Friend, *Leicester, March* 12, 1817.

I am extremely concerned to hear of the ill state of your health, which I fear, from what I have occasionally heard, has been declining for some time: it is my earnest prayer and hope the Lord may restore it, and spare you many years, for the good of your family and of the church. It is a great mortification to me that I am situated at such a distance as renders it impracticable for me to see you often; but I retain, and ever shall retain, the strongest sentiments of friendship and esteem, and the remembrance of innumerable acts of kindness and attention from you in my early days. Those days are fled, and we are both now far nearer to eternity than then; both I hope nearer to consummate blessedness. For yourself, I feel a full persuasion that your removal (may it be at a distant period!) will be unspeakable gain.

To come to the business of your letter, I believe I am expected this year at Hull, and that it is wished to collect for the mission. As far as I can judge, it will probably be about the time you mention, in August; but this remains to be settled with Mr. Birt, from whom I have not yet heard. When I hear from him, and the time is fixed, I will let you know; and I hope I shall be able to comply with your

wishes, by taking Leeds in my way home, as I expect to proceed thither from Cambridge. It will considerably facilitate my executing this plan, if your service is on a week-day, as I fear it will be quite out of my power to add another Sabbath to my excursion. It will give me very high satisfaction to see you once more in the flesh, if it be only for a day or two; the time, I am afraid, must be very short.

I am far advanced in my answer to Mr. Kinghorn, and expect it will be in the press in a very few weeks. I am afraid it will be a more hasty performance than I wish. It is exactly as you say: there is more difficulty in disentangling his arguments than in replying to them. He is unquestionably a clever man. I hope, however, that I have succeeded in showing the utter fallacy of the far greater part of his reasoning; but the public must judge.

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I desire to be affectionately remembered to Mrs. Langdon, and remain,

Your most affectionate Friend and Brother,

ROBERT HALL.

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## LVI.

### TO DR. RYLAND.

*Leicester, August* 8, 1817.

* * * You are the best judge, but I am quite at a loss to perceive the utility of having all the missionary sermons preached at one season. Such a method of procedure makes more noise and parade than if they were preached at separate times, it is true; and this is probably the chief motive for preferring it, with those who appear studious of ostentation in religious exertions: but to a person of your disposition I presume it would rather be repulsive. There is something I do not like in these perpetual suggestions of Mr. ——, respecting the deficiency of your collections for the Baptist Missions. If annual collections are made in each congregation, and such individuals are solicited to subscribe who are able and disposed, what can with propriety be done more? This perpetual struggle who shall get most money, and the theatrical and abominable arts exerted to procure it, prognosticate ill to the real interests of religion. There is one simple and effectual mode, in my opinion, of promoting the mission, which has never yet been tried on any extensive scale; namely, an annual collection in every Baptist congregation which is attached to its interests. If such a measure were resolved upon in your association, it would soon spread to others, and would shortly become a standing practice in all our congregations; and their number is such, that, with the sums which would incidentally fall in from other quarters, the pecuniary resources of the society would be as great as we ought to aspire to. As to collecting a great number of ministers together, for the purpose of making a collection, nothing in my opinion can be more injudicious. Besides,

why should more assemble than are wanted? and what a waste of money attendant on the travelling of so many from distant parts! I do most earnestly wish, my dear brother, you would set yourself in earnest towards promoting annual collections, and making them universal.

I feel extremely concerned for the uneasiness you have felt. My poor prayers will not be wanting in your behalf: but alas! how far am I from having power with God! Do not, my dear brother, let your spirits sink; you are dear to God, and he will, I am persuaded, support you, and bring forth your "righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noon-day."

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## LVII.

### TO WM. HOLLICK, ESQ.

My dear Friend, *Leicester, August* 11, 1817

It is with great concern I have heard of your illness. Mr. Edmonds informed me [some time ago that] you were very poorly; but I have been much concerned to hear that you have since been much worse, and that you suffer much from your complaint.

Mrs. Hall and myself have been long anticipating the pleasure of seeing you shortly at Cambridge, and of renewing the pleasure we derived from our former visit. But alas! how uncertain are all human prospects! how vain to depend upon any thing short of the promises of "Him who cannot lie!"

I hope, my dear friend, you enjoy the consolations of that religion you have been so long acquainted with, and the value of which is never more sensibly felt than under the pressure of affliction. How empty and delusive does the world then appear; and how unspeakably cheering that "good hope through grace" which the gospel inspires! To look up to God as a reconciled and compassionate Father,—to know that "He is touched with a feeling of our infirmities," and that He "made an everlasting covenant with us, well ordered in all things, and sure,"—these are wells of everlasting consolation. You, my dear friend, are, I trust, no stranger to these sure cordials and supports; and, with these, should you be called to pass through "the valley of the shadow of death, you will fear no evil; his rod and staff will comfort you." It is impossible for me to suggest any thing to your mind with which you are not already acquainted; but, might I be permitted to advert to my own experience, I should say, that I have found nothing so salutary as to turn the mind immediately to the Saviour: "Whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." To pray immediately to Christ, to cast ourselves incessantly upon His power and grace, as revealed in the gospel, appears to be the best antidote to every tendency to despondency. I have no doubt that we are much wanting to

ourselves in not having more direct dealings with the Saviour, or not addressing him now in the same spirit in which he was applied to for the relief of bodily disease. He is exalted at the right-hand of God, for the express purpose of dispensing pardon, peace, and eternal life to all that humbly seek his aid; and, wonderful condescension! he has declared he "will in nowise cast out whomsoever cometh unto him."

If I had not been particularly occupied with my answer to Mr. Kinghorn, which is now in the press, I should probably have been at Cambridge before this. Mrs. H. has suspended all thoughts of coming under present circumstances; but if it would be any particular gratification to you to see me, I will give up every engagement in order to see you; though it can be but for a few days. I desire to bless and adore the grace of God, in the signal change which has been wrought in the mind of Mr. N., to whom, as well as your daughter, Mrs. H unites with me in affectionate remembrances.

I am, dear Sir,
Your affectionate and sympathizing Friend,
ROBERT HALL.

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## LVIII.

### EXTRACT FROM A LETTER TO THE REV. W. BUTTON.

*Jan.* 5, 1818.

I am much surprised at the rapid sale of my sermon; which I impute not so much to its intrinsic merit (for I think I have printed better) as to the occasion. Mr. Combe proposes to publish two editions more making seven in the whole, as speedily as possible. I am afraid he will overdo it: if you are of that opinion, do stop him.* You will have an opportunity of judging while the fifth and sixth are selling.

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* The sermon here alluded to was that on the death of the Princess Charlotte of Wales. Mr. Combe's anticipations as to its sale seem to have been more accurate than those of the author, for it has gone through *sixteen* editions.—ED.

## LIX.

### TO THE REV. JAMES PHILLIPS. (EXTRACT.)

*Leicester, March* 6, 1818.

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What a loss would dear Mr. Hughes be to the Bible Society, and to the religious world in general! I beg to be most affectionately and respectfully remembered to him. Please to inform him when you see him how ardent is my desire, and that of thousands, that his most valuable life may be spared and protracted to a distant period. I rejoice to hear he is better, and hope he will be spared to the prayers of the religious public. I am quite of opinion, with you, that the admirable temper and prudence of Mr. Hughes have been as serviceable as the more brilliant talents of Mr. Owen: both admirable men,—*par nobile fratrum.*

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## LX.

### TO THE REV. THOMAS GRINFIELD, CLIFTON.

WHAT DOCTRINES ARE FUNDAMENTAL?

Dear Sir, *Leicester, Aug.* 5, 1818.

In reply to your favour of July 2d, which ought to have been answered sooner, you will not expect me to enter deeply into the subject in the compass of a letter. A very few, and possibly very superficial, remarks must suffice.

1. Whatever opinion may be formed about fundamentals, it cannot affect the solidity of my reasoning, which is directed to this:—that no church has a right (*in foro conscientiæ*) to demand more, as a term of communion, than that church deems essential to salvation. The evidence of this proposition is quite independent of the question, what is essential to salvation?

2. That some truths are fundamental besides those you have enumerated appears to me sufficiently manifest from the word of God. If Christ is set forth as a propitiation (or mercy-seat—ἱλαστήριον), *through faith in his blood*, then, faith in his blood is fundamental; and as the apostle is speaking of him as a *propitiation*, faith in his blood must mean a trust in him, under that character. But how can this consist with his being a mere prophet or martyr, or with the denial of his atonement? Again—"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the

wilderness," &c. Every orthodox interpreter supposes this is intended to represent Christ crucified, or lifted up on the cross, as a divinely-appointed source of cure to our spiritual maladies, and consequently an expectation of spiritual benefit from him, as crucified. But how does this consist with the idea of his death, as a mere circumstance confirming his doctrine, exclusive of any proper influence it is supposed to exert in the pardon of sin? He is said to be "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;" then justification, or acceptance with God, is the consequence of faith in him as the great antitype and completion of the legal sacrifices and ceremonies. We are everywhere affirmed to be justified by that faith of which he is the object; and if the conceptions entertained by the Socinians of that object are *essentially* different from ours, then must their faith in that object be equally so, and one or other of them essentially defective or erroneous. I am aware I have transgressed the canon you have laid down, which excludes a reference to particular texts. I have done so, because I am by no means satisfied respecting the justness of that canon. I am at a loss how general reasoning can ascertain the point in question, exclusive of an immediate appeal to the words of Scripture. It is with God to determine what is essential to be believed in order to salvation; and his determinations on this subject can only be ascertained by attentively weighing the sense of Scripture. It is true, different parties interpret particular passages differently: to quote these or similar passages to a Socinian would, it is confessed, be to little purpose. But *you*, my dear sir, profess *not* to be a Socinian: with *you*, therefore, the only question ought to be, Is the proposition which affirms faith in the atonement to be fundamental to salvation a legitimate inference from the commonly-received or orthodox interpretation of these passages? If it is, we must either renounce our orthodoxy or admit (however painful it may be) that inference. If the revealed method of salvation—revealed (I say) fully after the completion of the canon—is a cordial acceptance of Christ as the propitiation for the sins of the world, they who reject, deliberately and habitually, every idea of vicarious atonement, cannot be in that way. The belief of the messiahship of Christ was unquestionably held by the ancient heretics, or they could have made no pretension to be considered as Christians in any sense;—yet we know in what light they were regarded by the primitive Christians: and why should they who deny the miraculous conception, the incarnation, and the atonement of the Son of God be considered in a more favourable light? You yourself, not satisfied with the general proposition—the messiahship of Christ, descend to particular doctrines, *e. g.* the resurrection of the dead. But to me it appears that the collective moment of the doctrines I have mentioned is far more than that of the resurrection of the body, considered apart from the doctrine of immortality or a future life. In short, I can see no possible medium between giving up the doctrines already [mentioned,] and asserting their fundamental importance; since, supposing us to interpret aright the passages on which we found them, their belief is everywhere conjoined with saving benefits. Whether we interpret

these passages aright, is in no degree the question before us; but solely, supposing our interpretation correct, whether the *fundamental nature* of the doctrines in question is not a necessary consequence.

I return you my most sincere thanks for the favourable opinion you express of my performance; and that you may be guided into the midst of the paths of judgment is the sincere prayer of

Your obliged Friend and Servant,

ROBERT HALL.

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## LXI.

### TO THE REV. JOSEPH IVIMEY, LONDON.

My dear Sir, *Leicester, Feb.* 20, 1819.

I had intended long since to thank you very sincerely for your very valuable present of your two volumes of the History of the Baptists. I think it is highly creditable to yourself, and to the denomination to which you belong. I read them both with much interest and delight, and have seldom derived equal information and pleasure from any similar work. It will be a permanent monument of your talent and devotedness to the cause of religious truth and liberty. You have brought forward a great deal of curious information, with which the public were little, if at all, previously acquainted. I was much pleased with your style of narration: it is perspicuous, lively, and perfectly unaffected. With respect to reviewing it in the Baptist Magazine, I am sorry to be obliged to put a negative on your wishes. I have the *utmost aversion* to the whole business of reviewing, which I have long considered, in the manner in which it is conducted, a nefarious and unprincipled proceeding, and one of the greatest plagues of modern times. It was infinitely better for the interests of religion and literature when books had fair play, and were left to the unbiassed suffrages of the public. As it is, we are now doomed to receive our first impression and opinion of books from some of the wickedest, and others of the stupidest of men,—men, some of whom have not sense to write on any subject, nor others honesty to read what they pretend to criticise, yet sit in judgment upon all performances, and issue their insolent and foolish oracles to the public. To abolish the power of reviewing would be the greatest benefit a single man could confer on the public. At the same time, while *such things are*, the support of one like the Eclectic, upon sound principles, becomes a necessary evil. Your work wants no such artificial props.

Earnestly wishing your valuable life and labour may long be spared,

I remain, with much esteem, dear Sir,

Your obliged Friend and Brother,

ROBERT HALL.

## LXII.

### TO MRS. TUCKER.

Dear Madam, *Leicester, April* 16, 1819.

I feel myself much gratified and honoured by your kind and affectionate expressions of remembrance of an old friend, who, though long detained by circumstances from personal intercourse and correspondence, will never hear the name of Mrs. Tucker with indifference. I am delighted to hear from you, and to learn that, with all the changes effected by time, to which you so affectingly allude, the ardour of mind and warmth of sensibility by which you were formerly distinguished remain unimpaired. How wonderful, how complicated the mazes of providence through which we are conducted in our pilgrimage to eternity! Could we foresee the trials which await us, the agonies and vicissitudes we are called to pass through, life would be insupportable; but we are led, like the blind, by a way that we know not, and strength is dealt out just in proportion to our day. Let us, my dear friend, look forward, and remember that our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. Let us hope that the fiercest part of our mortal warfare is passed, and that the evening of life will be more tranquil than the morning and the noon. May our deep experience of the mutability and vanity of the present shadowy state be improved into a perpetual motive for cultivating that heavenly-mindedness which is the only effectual antidote to the miseries of life. With respect to my visiting Plymouth, I have heard nothing of it from any quarter; and should I be invited on the occasion you mention, it will be utterly out of my power this summer to comply with it. My engagements are already too numerous. But of this, my dear madam, be assured, that should my steps be directed to Plymouth at any time during your life, I shall never for a moment think of taking my abode but at your house, with your permission, should I be invited by a prince. You little know me if you suppose that rank and fashion would have the smallest influence in inducing a forgetfulness of ancient friendship. My chief inducement to visit Plymouth would be the pleasure of once more seeing and conversing with Mrs. Tucker. With my kindest remembrances to Mr. Tucker, I remain,

Dear Madam,
Your affectionate Friend,
ROBERT HALL.

## LXIII.

### TO THE REV. THOMAS LANGDON.

My dear Friend, *Leicester, Jan.* 11, 1820.

As Mr. Ryland is passing through to Leeds, I take the liberty of troubling you with a few lines, just to let you know how I and my family are, and to express my undiminished affection and attachment to one of my oldest and best friends. I look back with renewed pleasure on the scenes through which we have passed, and deeply regret that Providence has placed us at such a distance from each other that our opportunities of intercourse are so few. I hope the period will arrive when we shall spend an eternity together, and look back with mingled wonder and gratitude on all the way the Lord God has led us. What a scene will that present when the mysterious drama shall come to a close, and all the objects of this dark and sublunary state shall be contemplated in the light of eternity!

"O could we make our doubts remove,
Those gloomy doubts that rise,
And see the Canaan that we love
With unbeclouded eyes."

I am very sorry to hear that you have been so much afflicted with your asthmatic complaint. It is high time you retired from your school, and procured a house nearer your meeting. I am persuaded your long evening walks are extremely prejudicial. Do, my dear friend, be prevailed upon to give up your evening lectures. It is what you owe to your family to be as attentive as possible to your health. "Do thyself no harm," is an apostolic injunction.

I was much affected to hear of the death of dear Mr. Robert Spear. It must have been peculiarly distressing to the amiable youth I saw at your house. He was a most excellent man, and has no doubt had an abundant entrance into the joy of his Lord. May we be followers of those who thus inherit the promises. My health is, through mercy, very good. Mrs. Hall is at present very much indisposed by a bad cold and oppression of the lungs, but through blistering and bleeding is, through mercy, better. Let me indulge the hope that next summer you and Mrs. Langdon will visit me at Leicester. Be assured that the company of no friend would give me more pleasure.

Please to remember me affectionately to Mrs. Langdon, to your family, and to all inquiring friends as if named.

I am your affectionate Friend and Brother,

ROBERT HALL.

## LXIV.

### TO A GENTLEMAN AT TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

Dear Sir, *Leicester, April* 30, 1821.

I am considerably at a loss how to answer your letter. I sincerely sympathize with you in the perplexity you experience on a very high and awful subject. For my own part, I acquiesce in the usual and popular interpretation of the passages which treat on the future doom of the finally impenitent. My reasons, in brief, are as follows:—I assume it as a maxim, that we are utterly incompetent to determine, *à priori*, what is the amount of guilt incurred by such as reject the overtures of the gospel, any further than God has been pleased to make it the subject of express revelation; that the terms expressive of the duration of future misery are as forcible as the Greek language supplies; that the same term is applied to the duration of misery as to the duration of happiness, or even the eternity of God himself (Matt. xxv. 46; Rev. xix. 3); that the exclusion of the impenitent from happiness is asserted in the most positive terms—"They shall *not* see life," &c. &c., that "their worm dieth *not*, and their fire is *not* extinguished;" that positive terms may be understood in different degrees of latitude, but this is impossible respecting negative terms, since a negation admits of no degrees.

If the eternal misery of a certain number can be rendered conducive to a greater amount of good in relation to the universe at large than any other plan of action, then the attribute of goodness requires it; for I take it for granted that the Supreme Being will adopt that scheme, whatever it be, which will produce the greatest quantity of happiness on the whole. But our faculties are too limited, and our knowledge of the laws of the moral world, and of the relation which one part of the universe bears to another, too imperfect to enable us to say that this is impossible. For aught we know, therefore, the existence of eternal misery may not only consist with, but be the necessary effect of, supreme goodness. At all events, it is a subject of pure revelation, on the interpretation [of which] every one must be left to form his own judgment. If the milder interpretation can be sustained by a preponderating evidence, I shall most sincerely rejoice; but I have yet seen nothing to satisfy me that this is the case.

I would only add, that in my humble opinion the doctrine of the eternal duration of future misery, metaphysically considered, is not an essential article of faith, nor is the belief of it ever proposed as a term of salvation; that if we really flee from the wrath to come, by truly repenting of our sins, and laying hold of the mercy of God through Christ, by a lively faith, our salvation is perfectly secure, whichever hypothesis we embrace on this most mysterious subject. The evidence accompanying the popular interpretation is by no means to be compared

so that which establishes our common Christianity; and therefore the fate of the Christian religion is not to be considered as implicated in the belief or disbelief of the popular doctrine.

Earnestly wishing you may be relieved from all painful solicitude on the question, and be guided by the Spirit of God into the paths of truth and holiness, I remain,

Your obedient humble Servant,

ROBERT HALL

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## LXV.

### TO RICHARD FOSTER, JUN., ESQ.

Dear Sir, *Leicester, July* 21, 1821.

I thank you for your kind favour (which I should have acknowledged sooner, but was not at home), including a draft for 77*l.*, and odd.

With respect to my sermon on the Trinity, I entered into no metaphysical disquisition whatever: I merely confined myself to the adducing passages which go to prove a plurality of persons in the blessed Godhead; such as the plural name of God in the Hebrew, the use of plural pronouns, the injection of plurals in the name of God coupled with singular verbs, the use of the terms Makers, Creators, &c. I adduced Isaiah, saying, "The Lord hath sent me and his Spirit," &c. From the New Testament I mentioned the baptismal form, the salutation to the Corinthians. To these I added the principal passages usually adduced in proof of the divinity of Christ and the personality of the Spirit. In short, it was a mere appeal to the letter of Scripture, without the smallest attempt at metaphysical refinement. I considered that doctrine continually as a doctrine of pure revelation, to which reasoning can add nothing but darkness and uncertainty. It appears, however, to me replete with practical improvement, being adapted to exhibit the part which each person in the blessed Trinity sustained in the economy of redemption in the most engaging light, and to excite the utmost ardour of gratitude. The time was when I maintained the dual system, supposing the Holy Spirit to be an energy; but I have long found abundant reason to renounce that doctrine, and now find much complacency in the ancient doctrine of the Trinity.

As you mention the [meeting-house] being shut up, I hope it is to heighten it. I have no doubt that the extreme heat and closeness of the place must have a very injurious effect on the health both of the minister and people. I hope you continue comfortable, and that the Lord is giving testimony to the word of his grace. The interest of religion in a church which I served so long and so happily will ever lie near my heart.

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I am your affectionate Brother,

ROBERT HALL.

## LXVI.

### TO THE REV. ISAIAH BIRT.

My dear Sir, *Leicester, May* 29, 1822.

I am much obliged to you for your very cheerful compliance with my proposal respecting supplying and preaching for our school during my visit to Kidderminster. It is an arrangement which gives high satisfaction to our people. The prospect of spending a little time with my dear and honoured friend is, I confess, my chief inducement for proposing it. I should be very unhappy if I did not spend a little time with you, at least once a year; and as Providence has happily placed us in the same general vicinity, I shall always eagerly embrace the opportunity it affords. Friendship is the balm of life; and the thought that time must dissolve, ere long, the tie that has so long united us, would be melancholy indeed, were it not for the consoling recollection of a reunion in a better world: "Let us love one another, for love is of God;" and I hourly hope we are both training up for a world of perfect love. I am certain of it respecting *you*. O that I had as great an assurance respecting myself! But I have a feeble hope, which I would not exchange for a world!

With respect to the other part of the arrangement, having heard nothing from Tamworth as yet, it seems premature to say any thing of it. But I must say that I can by no means comply with it. My lecture is on Wednesday, to which I justly attach a great importance; and the arrangement you mention would occasion my absence *two* Wednesdays, which I would not incur for any ordination whatever. Ordination services, as they are now conducted, I consider as of more show than use. The presence of one or two ministers, along with the church, accompanied with prayer and laying on of hands, and a few serious exhortations, would be a genuine Scriptural ordination. Nothing can be more distant from this than the manner in which these things are at present conducted. Suffice it to say, that I can by no means consent to be absent two lectures for such a purpose. You may, therefore, expect to see me on Friday at Birmingham. I beg to be most affectionately remembered to dear Mrs. Birt, and to dear Mrs. Tucker and her husband.

I am your affectionate Brother,

ROBERT HALL.

## LXVII.

### TO THE REV. THOMAS LANGDON, OF LEEDS

ON THE DEATH OF HIS DAUGHTER.

My dear Friend, *Leicester, January* 9, 1823.

I am much concerned to hear of the heavy bereavement with which it has pleased God to afflict you and dear Mrs. Langdon, by the unexpected removal of your most amiable daughter. I never saw a young female whose character impressed me with higher esteem. I cannot wonder for a moment that your tears flow freely on her account. It is, indeed, a most severe and afflictive stroke, which none but a parent, and the parent of such a child, can duly appreciate. I feel myself highly honoured and gratified in the recollection of having possessed any share in her esteem.

Still, my dear friend, there is much mercy mingled with the severity of the dispensation. It is an unspeakable mercy to be able to reflect on the decided piety of the dear deceased, which so eminently prepared her for the event you so deeply deplore. Nor is it a small alleviation of the anguish resulting from such a stroke, to reflect that the time is short, and the end of all things at hand. Painful as is the thought to all your friends, to you, my dear friend, it must be familiar, that, in all probability, her separation from you will be but of short duration; and that she has entered, a little while before you, into that blessed eternity for which you have long been waiting.

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## LXVIII.

### TO THE REV. THOMAS GRINFIELD, CLIFTON.

ON HUTCHINSONIANISM.

Dear Sir, *Leicester, March* 4, 1823.

I must beg your pardon for not sooner replying to your favour, in which you condescend to inquire my opinion on the subject of Hutchinsonianism. The reason of my delay was my conscious inability to give an opinion entitled to any degree of weight. I have been in the habit of considering Hutchinsonianism as a tissue of fancies, unsupported by reason or Scripture; and all that has occurred to me to read on that system, has confirmed that impression. I have attentively perused Parkhurst's Dissertation on the Cherubic Figures in the Temple: it appears to me a most confused and unsatisfactory disquisition; nor is he able to answer, in any tolerable degree, the objection arising from their being represented in the attitude of worshippers. He

attempts to get over this by observing, that though the divine Persons whom they represent could not without absurdity be represented in the character of worshippers, their symbols might: but this is to me utterly unintelligible. He is evidently much embarrassed with the *four* faces; a most unlikely symbol of a Trinity. I am equally dissatisfied with his notion of the three elements of air, light, and fire being intended as natural types and symbols of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For this there appears to me not a shadow of proof. The metaphors of Scripture afford none whatever; as is evident from this one consideration, that the figurative language of Scripture is interpreted as naturally and as easily without the aid of the Hutchinsonian hypothesis as with it. What is that sort of typical instruction which never instructed? And where is the people to be found, where the individual, who learned the doctrine of the Trinity from the works of nature? I cannot suppose it would ever have suggested itself to a single mind, had it not been communicated, probably, among the earliest revelations of God.

My utter despair of deriving any solid benefit from these speculations must plead my excuse for not occupying my attention in any attempt to investigate the merits of the system more closely; and I am truly concerned to hear that Mr. B. designs to write upon the subject. I am afraid it will have no other effect than to strengthen existing prejudices against evangelical doctrine.

I am, dear Sir, with much esteem,
Yours most respectfully,
ROBERT HALL

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## LXIX.

### TO THE REV. ——.

IN REPLY TO A REQUEST TO WRITE A REVIEW.

My dear Friend, *Leicester, Nov.* 16, 1823.

You have put me on a most irksome task; and were the request to come from almost any other quarter, I should refuse to comply without a moment's hesitation. I find it difficult to deny you any thing; but, really, you could scarcely have proposed any thing to me more disagreeable. I think very highly of your son's publication; so that my objections arise in no degree from that quarter. But, in the first place, I am far from being satisfied of the propriety of suffering the sentiments of private friendship to prevail in a review. A reviewer professes to be a literary judge; and his sentence ought to be as unbiassed as that of any magistrate whatever. But what should we think of a judge who permitted himself to be tampered with by either party concerned, with a view to procure a favourable decision? In the exercise of his censorial office, a reviewer ought to have neither friends

nor enemies. It is an adherence to this maxim which can alone secure the dignified impartiality of criticism, or entitle it to the smallest degree of credit. A work like your son's does not need artificial support; and one of an opposite description does not deserve it. Your son should rest calmly on his own merits, with a becoming confidence that an enlightened public will not fail to do him justice. There was never a period in my life when I would have stooped to solicit a review. I speak on the supposition of the application originating with him.

In the next place, when it is known I have complied in this instance, I shall be harassed with innumerable applications. ———, in particular, will have the justest reason to complain: for he has at different times most vehemently importuned me to review particular works, which I have steadily refused; and the only method I have found to shield myself from his importunities has been to renounce reviewing altogether. I think it probable he would not admit my review; I am sure he ought not, for the reasons I have assigned, and I have laid him under no such obligation as to induce him to depart from the straight-forward path. I do not suppose I could bring myself to speak higher of the work than an impartial reader would do; and what advantage, then, could be derived from my reviewing it? But supposing I did, where would be the justice to the public? You perceive, my dear friend, the difficulties which surround me, and the reasons why, in my humble opinion, the interference of friendship should not be allowed in such cases.

I write altogether in the dark. You have not informed me in what Review you would wish me to write; nor do I know whether it has been reviewed already. I am not at all in the habit of reading either the Eclectic or any other Review: indeed, I wish the whole tribe could be put an end to.

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## LXX.

### TO MR. J. E. RYLAND. (EXTRACT.)

*Leicester*, 1824.

* * * I cannot write but upon some specified subject; and that subject must be something which suggests itself spontaneously to my thoughts. I feel an insuperable repugnance to the bending of my mind to the suggestion of others: it must be free as air, or I cannot move to any purpose: whatever I write must *originate* entirely with myself. Though I have no objection to gaining money, yet my love of it is not sufficiently strong for it to have any sensible influence in directing my literary exertions. There are several subjects, which I have revolved in my mind, to which I feel a decided preference; and if I present myself to the public at all, it must be in the discussion of

these. As to Pascal, few admire him more than myself: but, in writing an introduction, I should feel myself quite out at sea; I should float without any determinate direction; my mind would have no determinate object; and, not having a distinct idea of what I wished to do, I should do nothing to any purpose. For elegant and specious declamation, I have no sort of talent. I must have a brief; I must have something like a fixed thesis, some proposition I wish to establish or illustrate, or I feel perfectly cold and indifferent. For my part, I let every man pursue his own plans: how it is that I am doomed to be the perpetual object of advice, admonition, expostulation, &c. &c., as a writer, I know not. I am sure it does not arise from any proofs I have given of superior docility. I know myself so well as to be distinctly aware that importunities of this kind have always the effect of indisposing me to their object. I should have written *more* had I been urged *less*; and when the public cease to dictate to me, I shall feel myself my own master.

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## LXXI.

### TO MRS. LANGDON.

#### ON THE DEATH OF HER HUSBAND.

My dear Madam, *Leicester, Oct.* 23, 1824.

The melancholy intelligence of the death of dear Mr. Langdon has deeply affected me; and most happy should I deem myself were it in my power to administer effectual consolation under such a stroke. I refrained from addressing you immediately, waiting for the first transports of grief to subside; because I well know that premature attempts to console only irritate the sorrows they are meant to heal. Let me indulge the hope, that by this time reason and religion are come to your aid, and that you are prepared to say, with the greatest and most illustrious of sufferers, "Even so, Father; for so it seemeth good in thy sight."

The remarkable combination of the most lovely qualities with the most fervent piety, which distinguished the character of our dear friend, while they enhance the sense of your loss, will, I hope, mitigate its bitterness in another view, by assuring you that "great is his reward in heaven." Death to him is, undoubtedly, "exceeding great gain;" nor would you, in your best moments, wish to draw him down from his elevated abode, to this vale of sorrow and affliction. The stroke was not entirely sudden and unexpected: a long series of attacks and infirmities must, no doubt, have contributed to familiarize your mind to the event. Remember, my dear madam, that the separation is but for a season; our dear friend is not lost, but preferred to an infinitely higher state, where he is awaiting your arrival. To me his removal

will long be a source of deep regret; for where shall I find a friend equally amiable, tender, and constant?*

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I beg to be most affectionately remembered to each of your dear children, earnestly praying that their father's God may be their God. Wishing and praying that you may be favoured with the richest consolations of religion

I remain, my dearest Madam,
Your affectionate Friend,
ROBERT HALL

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## LXXII.

### TO J. B. WILLIAMS, ESQ., SHREWSBURY.

Dear Sir *Leicester, March* 29, 1825.

Some apology is necessary for not having sooner acknowledged your very kind present of your new and highly improved edition of the admirable Philip Henry, whom you have the honour, I find, of enumerating among your ancestors. It is a descent with which you have more reason to be satisfied than if you could trace your pedigree from the Plantagenets. I waited only until I had time to renew my acquaintance with the Life of that amiable man, and to form an estimate of the improvements it has derived from diligent researches. I have not yet entirely completed the volume; but I am now busy in doing so, and have read enough to satisfy myself of the great obligations you have conferred on the public by this excellent work. The additional documents and letters by which you have enriched and enlarged the original narrative, constitute a treasure of wisdom and piety, for which you are entitled to the warm acknowledgments of every Christian reader, and especially of every dissenter. May a double portion of his spirit descend on the rising generation of ministers!

The labour and research requisite for furnishing such a repast must have been great; but not more so, I dare say, than the pleasure you derived from the consciousness of conferring so important a benefit on the public. Permit me to thank you, most sincerely, for the favour you have done me by the bestowment of so valuable a present. It were highly desirable that more such biographies of the illustrious dead, improved and enlarged as this, might be given to the public: if it had no other fruit than to withdraw their attention a little from that farrago of periodical trifles, by which the public mind is dissipated, and its taste corrupted. * * * * * *

I remain, dear Sir,
Your highly obliged Friend and Servant,
ROBERT HALL.

* Mr. Langdon and Mr. Hall had been fellow-students at Bristol; and ever after cherished for each other the warmest esteem and affection.—ED.

## LXXIII.

### TO MR. J. E. RYLAND.

My dear Sir, *Leicester, May* 21, 1825.

I am extremely concerned to hear the melancholy account your letter contains of the situation of your dear and honoured father, at the same time that I feel grateful to you for the communication. I had heard previously that he was supposed to be in a declining state; but, little imagining he was so ill, your letter gave me a violent shock. With God all things are possible; and who can tell but the Lord may yet raise him up, and assign him more work to do before he is taken to his eternal reward? It is my earnest wish and prayer that such may be the result. His loss will be most deeply felt, not only by his afflicted family, but by a very numerous circle of friends, and by the church of God at large. For himself, all is and will be well; nothing can possibly befall him but what will be highly to his advantage. A man of a more eminently holy and devoted spirit than that of your dear father it has never been my lot to witness, and very, very few who made any approach to him. I feel, in the prospect of his removal, much for the family, the academy, and the church. You, my dear sir, together with your very excellent mother and sisters, will be the objects of a deep and extensive sympathy: but God, whose ways, though mysterious, are always gracious and merciful towards them that fear him, will, I doubt not, sustain and support you under this afflicting stroke, and cause it afterward to work the peaceable fruits of righteousness. His prayers will draw down innumerable blessings on those who were nearest and dearest to him; for who can doubt that the prayers of such a man must avail much? The impression of his example and the memory of his virtues will suggest a most powerful motive to constancy, patience, and perseverance in the ways of God. You will never cease to bless God for having bestowed upon you such a parent. His humility, meekness, tenderness, devotedness to God, and zeal for the interests of truth and holiness, will long endear him to the Christian world, and make his name like the odour of precious ointment. What, in the event of your dear father's removal, will become of the academy and the church; I tremble to think of the consequences: never, surely, could he have been spared with more serious injury to the most important interests! May the eyes of all of us be [turned] to God for his direction and blessing! I should have written to your dear father himself, but feared it might agitate and disturb him. I beg you to remember me to him in the most earnest, respectful, and affectionate terms, and assure him of a deep interest in my feeble prayers. I beg, also, to be most affectionately remembered to your dear mother, sisters, and every part of the family. That the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob may take your dear father under the cover of his wings,—and

should he walk through the valley and shadow of death, afford him his rod and his staff,—and that this most affecting visitation may be sanctified for the eternal benefit of all the parties concerned, is, my dear sir, the earnest prayer of

Your most affectionate and sympathizing Friend,

ROBERT HALL.

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## LXXIV.

### TO MR. J. E. RYLAND. (EXTRACT.)

*Leicester, May* 29, 1825.

* * * It gives me much pleasure, but no surprise, to hear that the end of your dear father was emphatically peace. What else, or what less, could be expected from such a life? As he was one of the brightest examples of holiness on earth, no doubt great is his reward in heaven. May it be your happiness, my dear sir, and mine, to follow, though at an humble distance, so bright a pattern. May we not be slothful, but followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises. I need not repeat how much I feel for your dear mother, and the whole bereaved family. It is, indeed, an irreparable loss; but such is the tenure of all earthly bliss. May we be enabled to lay hold on eternal life!

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## LXXV.

### TO MRS. RYLAND.

ON THE DEATH OF DR. RYLAND.

* * * Permit me, my dear madam, to express the deep sympathy I, in common with innumerable others, feel for you under your irreparable loss. The magnitude of it none can adequately estimate but yourself: but it is consoling to reflect, that you are not called to sorrow as those that have no hope; that, on the contrary, our loss is his unspeakable gain. And the time is short: a very few years will put an end to all our sorrows; and, if we are the Lord's, will reunite us to all those whom we have most loved upon earth.

As you have been highly distinguished by the blessing of possessing such a companion for life, so it is no inconsiderable honour to have contributed so essentially and so long to the felicity of the best of men. All who know you will ever respect you, not only as the relict of Dr. Ryland, but as the distinguished individual who entitled herself to his gratitude by such a series of unremitting attentions and kind offices

(the remembrance of which must be a source of melancholy pleasure) as will doubtless draw down a blessing from Him to whom he was dear. It is my earnest prayer, that the God who reveals himself as the father of the fatherless and the husband of the widow, may take you under his especial protection, and supply you with those rich and ineffable consolations which are neither few nor small. We have the word of Him that cannot lie, to assure us that "all things shall work together for good to them that love God." That you may feel more of his sustaining hand, and of his blissful presence, is, dear madam, the earnest prayer of

Your affectionate and sympathizing Friend,

ROBERT HALL.

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## LXXVI.

### TO MR. ARTHUR TOZER,* BRISTOL.

IN REFERENCE TO MR. HALL'S REMOVAL TO BROADMEAD.

My dear Friend, *Leicester, July* 19, 1825.

I am very sorry your kind letters have remained unanswered so long: it was the consequence of their arriving while I was absent from home. I did not arrive at Leicester till last Saturday, having staid at Kettering, in order to preach for the mission, which I did morning and evening.

The letters from you ought, in all reason, to have been sent forward; but this was impracticable, because my whole family were, at the same time, on an excursion for their health. I hope you will be so good as to accept this as a sufficient apology for my apparent neglect. Had I been guilty of any voluntary one towards a friend whom I so highly esteem, I should never forgive myself.

It is impossible for me to hear the favourable opinion which you and the rest of my friends entertain of me, without being deeply sensible of their kindness. I feel myself most unworthy of such an expression of their regard; the consciousness of which, while it enhances my gratitude, impairs my pleasure. Could I see my way clear to leave Leicester, I should still tremble at the thought of being placed in a situation in which I must necessarily sustain a comparison with your late beloved and lamented pastor.

In an affair of so much magnitude, I should wish to avoid whatever might wear the appearance of precipitance; and on that account, should the church at Broadmead see fit to give me an invitation to the pastoral office, I should wish to be allowed some time before I give a decisive answer. On some very obvious accounts I should prefer Bristol, perhaps, to any other situation; and the state of the church at Leicester

* Mr. Tozer was one of the deacons of the church at Broadmead

is far from being precisely as I could wish. Still the aspect of things is brightening; the clouds I trust are beginning to disperse; and an important step has already been taken towards the restoration of mutual confidence and affection. I feel at present inclined to believe it is my duty to stay at Leicester. I wish most earnestly to be directed from above, and that the few remaining years of my life (if any are allotted me) may be passed where they may best subserve the best of causes. I am not at all given to change: I have long fixed it in my mind that it was the design of Heaven that I shall finish my days here; and had nothing occurred to disturb our tranquillity, I should not have indulged a thought to the contrary. I do most earnestly bespeak an interest in your prayers, that my way may be directed of the Lord; and that "for me to live may be Christ, and to die gain."

Pecuniary considerations, as you suspect, will have little influence in guiding my determination. I beg to be most affectionately remembered to all inquiring friends, and remain, dear sir,

Your affectionate Friend and Brother,

ROBERT HALL.

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## LXXVII.

### TO THE SAME.

My very dear Friend, *Leicester, August* 11, 1820

I should have sooner written to you but on two accounts; first, the almost ceaseless interruptions I have met with since my return from London, which have kept me in a perpetual hurry; and second, my inability, even at present, to give you the satisfaction you wish by a decisive answer. Sensible as I deeply am of the unmerited tokens of respect shown me by my Bristol friends, and solicitous if possible to comply with all their wishes, I still feel difficulties in the way, which I know not how to surmount. The church at Leicester is much agitated on the occasion, and have evinced great unanimity in their resolution to adopt the speediest and most effectual measures in order to remove the principal source of my uneasiness. There appears to be but one feeling pervading the church and congregation. What success may attend their efforts to restore peace God only knows; but should they be successful, I shall find it very difficult to separate myself from them. To inflict the pain it would occasion to many excellent persons and kind friends would cost me a conflict for which I feel myself little prepared. In truth, the motives for staying in my present situation, and the motives for relinquishing it, are so equally balanced, that I am kept still in a state of suspense; and am habitually under some apprehension, that whatever choice I make, I shall be apt to repent not having made an opposite one. It is certainly an humbling consideration, not to be able to come to a speedier decision; but I feel the weight of the affair, and that the consequences of it, both to myself and others

will probably be greater than can result from any future step in my life. I earnestly implore an interest in your prayers, that the Lord would be pleased to direct me, and that, wherever the bounds of my habitation may be fixed, "Christ may be magnified in my body, whether by my life or my death." The greatest annoyance of my life, for some years past, has arisen from not being able to command my time, particularly in the morning; and could I be assured of my possessing this inestimable privilege, the poorest and most neglected village would possess irresistible charms for me. The afternoon and evening I have always been willing to abandon to the use of others; but to have no time I can call my own,—to be liable to have the most precious hours of reading and meditation snatched from me,—is an evil, to one of my temperament, almost insupportable. Now I greatly fear this evil would be increased at Bristol. One advantage I should enjoy at Bristol (the want of which I severely feel here) is, access to books; but what will this avail me, if I have no time to read them?

I have carefully inspected the documents relating to Terril's deeds, brought by Messrs. Sherring and Phillips. It is my decided opinion that the pastor of Broadmead is under no obligation to prepare young men for the ministry, unless they are presented to him for that purpose; a thing most unlikely to happen, when such ample means of education are already provided. Should it occur, however, he has only to make his election, either to comply with the demand, or to relinquish his interest in the establishment. As to the fear of incurring penalties, it is too ridiculous to be thought of. All this, however, I most cheerfully leave to the determination of the trustees; for if ever I was sincere in any thing, it is when I declare that pecuniary considerations will have no influence in my decision. To *deteriorate* my situation would be injustice to my family: beyond that, I have no solicitude. I beg to be most affectionately remembered to Mr. James and my sisters, and all friends, as if named. I remain, dear sir,

Your affectionate Friend and Brother,

ROBERT HALL.

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## LXXVIII.

### TO THE SAME.

My very dear Friend, *Leicester, Oct.* 3, 1825.

I am as much ashamed as any of my friends can be, to keep them so long in suspense respecting my determination in regard to removing to Bristol. I feel it to be of so much importance to my own happiness, and in the relation it bears to the spiritual interests of a large body of people, both here and at Bristol, that I tremble at the thought of coming to a final decision. My inclination, I confess, stands towards Bristol. The reasons are obvious: two sisters, justly dear to me, residing there; a place dear to me from ancient recollections, and

from the most enchanting scenery; access to books, a want which I most grievously feel here; many old friends, or the families of old friends, whom I much love and esteem; a superior description of society; and, I may add, equal, if not superior, prospects of usefulness. These, it must be acknowledged, are weighty considerations, and I feel them in their full force, insomuch that I feel myself incapable of relinquishing the thought of Bristol without a pang. On the other hand, I most sensibly feel the difficulty of leaving a people who are most affectionately attached, and a congregation which I have, through mercy, been the instrument of raising from a very low to a very flourishing state. The certainty of giving great uneasiness to many excellent and worthy friends, and of being accessary to the injury of an interest which ought ever to be dear to me, presses much upon my mind: it is, indeed, the grand difficulty I feel in the way of leaving Leicester. I tremble at the thought of destroying what I have been the means of building up. I tremble at the thought of rushing into a sphere of action to which I am not called, and, it may be, of offending God by deserting my proper post. As it is the *last* remove, in all probability, I shall ever be tempted to make before I am conveyed to the "house appointed for all living," I feel extremely anxious that it may be made with the Divine approbation, conscious that my times are in the Lord's hands. I desire most sincerely to acknowledge him in all my ways. O that I might hear a voice behind me, saying, "This is the way, walk thou in it!" My mind is much perplexed, my resolution not decided. I feel a conflict between opposite motives, and am drawn by contrary attractions; though, were I to consult my inclinations alone, I should certainly decide for Bristol: my advanced period of life, and the apprehension of its possible, if not probable, effects on the interests of religion, form the grand objections. One thing I must beg leave to mention, that were I to settle with you, I should decline taking any share in the monthly lecture. In the united prayer-meeting I should engage with pleasure. I have but little opinion of the utility of the first of those meetings.

On the whole I must request *one* month more, and at the end of that time (if my life is spared) you may reckon upon my giving you a decisive answer. During that interval, I will again seek Divine guidance; and I humbly hope I shall receive it. At all events I will not keep you longer in suspense, and am truly concerned at having exercised your patience so long.

I beg to be most affectionately remembered to Mr. Holden, and thank him sincerely for his kind letter. My best regards await all inquiring friends. My love to dear Mr. and Mrs. James, and my sister.

I remain, my dear Sir,

Your affectionate Friend and Brother,

ROBERT HALL.

## LXXIX.

### TO THE SAME.

My dear Friend, *Leicester, Dec.* 6, 1825.

I have just time at present to inform you that I have come to a determination to accept the invitation the church and congregation of Broadmead have thought fit to give me, on the following terms: that I make trial of the situation for *one year*, and that at the termination of it, if it should not answer our mutual purposes, each party, *i. e.* the church and myself, shall be at liberty to separate. I do not say this from the smallest desire that the union may not be permanent; I earnestly hope and pray that it may: but futurities are in the hand of God; and if the change of situation should be found materially to affect my health, which at my stage of existence is equivalent to life, or if the ends we propose are not answered, I may be at liberty, after a fair trial, to dissolve the connexion, without incurring the charge of levity and inconstancy. If I shall be spared to come, it will be with the hope and intention of living and dying among you, nor shall I, cherish any expectation of change; but imperious reasons, connected with my happiness and usefulness, may arise to determine me to the contrary, of which I shall probably be able by that time to form a judgment.

I write this in haste, as I expect Mr. Daniell every moment, who is setting out at two o'clock. I shall address a letter to the church in a few days: I purpose to direct it to you; when you will be so good as to forward it, or read it to the church. I have only one thing to request, and that is of great importance; that you will grant me an interest in your prayers, that my way may be prospered, that I may be kept from falling, and that my removal to Bristol may be instrumental to the conversion of sinners, and to the building up the church in faith and holiness. Let me beg you, my dear and honoured friend, not to forget me at a throne of grace. My assurance of this on your part, and on the part of my friends in general, would add unspeakably to the comfort of,

My dear Sir,
Your affectionate Friend and Brother,
ROBERT HALL.

P. S.—I beg my love to Mr. and Mrs. James, and sister Mary. Kind remembrances to all friends.

## LXXX.

### TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST ASSEMBLING IN BROADMEAD BRISTOL.

ON ACCEPTING THE PASTORAL OFFICE.

My dear Brethren, *Leicester, Dec.* 21, 1825.

After long and mature deliberation, and earnest prayer, I write these lines to inform you that I accept the invitation you have been pleased to give me to the pastoral office. That it may become a mutual blessing, and that you and myself may reap the fruit of it, in the glory of God, the spiritual improvement of each other, and the conversion of sinners from the error of their way, will, I trust, continue to be, as it has already been, the object of your frequent and fervent supplication to the throne of Grace. Be assured I feel deeply my utter inability for the adequate discharge of the weighty duties which devolve upon me, and particularly my unfitness to walk in the steps of your late venerable pastor. My only hope amid the discouragement arising from this quarter is placed in "your prayers, and the supply of the Spirit of Christ Jesus." Conscious as I am of innumerable imperfections, I must rely on your candour for a favourable construction of my conduct, and reception of my labours. Permit me, my dear brethren, to conclude, by "recommending you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified by the faith of Jesus." I remain, dear Brethren,

Your affectionate Friend and Brother,

ROBERT HALL.

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## LXXXI.

### TO THE REV. P. J. SAFFERY, OF SALISBURY.

Dear Sir, *Leicester, Jan.* 16, 1826.

I duly received your favour, and cannot be insensible to the honour you have done me, in wishing me to assist at your approaching ordination, by delivering a charge. I am sorry you appear to lay so much stress upon it, because it makes me the more uneasy in putting that negative on your wishes which my judgment and my inclination dictate. As I intend to avoid engagements out of Bristol as much as possible, and very rarely, if ever, to officiate at ordinations, I can by no means consent to begin my career there by an engagement of that nature, which would at once, by giving erroneous expectations, be productive

of much inconvenience. Nearly all the spare time I can command from my proper station will necessarily be occupied in visiting the connexions among which I have lived, and where I have numerous old and tried friends, who must be ever dear to my heart. As to ordinations, it has long been my opinion that they are best conducted by the presbyters or elders of the immediate vicinity of the party; and that to step beyond that circle is to sacrifice or impair the chief benefit of that practice, which is the putting a wholesome check on the abuse of the popular suffrage, by making it impossible for a minister to establish himself at the head of a congregation without the approbation and sanction of the circle of pastors with whom he is to act. It is an affair in which the church are chiefly or solely concerned; and though the calling in a stranger on such occasions may attract a greater audience, it is, in my humble opinion, at the expense of more important objects. For these and other reasons that might be adduced, you must allow me *firmly*, though most respectfully, to decline the service you have been pleased to assign me; and, to cut off any occasion of [discussion,] I must request the favour of [your] accepting this reply as *final*.

I cannot close these lines, however, without expressing the pleasure it affords me to find you are likely to succeed your excellent father. That a double portion of his spirit may rest upon you is, dear sir, the sincere desire and prayer of

Your sincere Friend and humble Servant,

ROBERT HALL.

P.S.—I beg to be respectfully remembered to your excellent mother though personally unknown.

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## LXXXII.

### TO THE REV. DR. J. P. SMITH, HOMERTON.

Rev. and dear Sir, *Bristol, Nov.* 3, 1826.

I have to complain of a good deal of misrepresentation in what is stated in your letter, as having passed in my interview with Dr. Malan. The conversations (for they were two) passed at my house, not at Clifton. He was insisting much on the absolute necessity of the full assurance of our personal salvation, which, as he appeared to carry it to a great extent, led me to remark that it seemed to me a most desirable attainment, and what every sincere Christian ought to seek after with diligence, rather than as essential to the very [existence] of religion. And in the course of conversation, I confessed that I had it not myself. At this he expressed his surprise, and began with emphasis to recite that passage in John's epistle, "He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." His discourse to me on this subject was not satisfactory. Part of it was not very intelligible:

and part, as far as I did understand it, was injudicious, and bordering on enthusiasm. I certainly was extremely struck with the indications of exalted piety and love exhibited by his whole deportment, and particularly his countenance. I must confess there was something in his looks that reminded me more of the ideal picture I have formed of the Saviour, than I ever saw before in any human being: and as I am too prone to express myself in the style of hyperbole, it is to that part of his character that the expression your letter quoted must be understood to allude. Though I am certain I never used some of the words imputed to me, particularly those in which I am represented as saying, "All other men were brutes and beasts compared to him." I am equally a stranger to the words and the ideas, you may depend on it. I never acknowledged the little success of my sermons arose from my ministry not being accompanied with the baptism of the Holy Ghost. He observed that my printed discourses (of these only he spoke) wanted simplicity: nor was I at all concerned or surprised at that; for he found much fault with Maclaurin's, on "Glorying in the Cross of Christ," which he accused of the same defect, observing that it exhibited the truth, but did not exhibit his Master; a remark which appeared to me (as I observed to him) very unintelligible. I never gave thanks aloud that Dr. Malan was brought to Bristol; nothing of the kind ever passed from me. I probably did (indeed I know I did) express myself much gratified in having an opportunity of a personal interview; and I parted from him with much esteem and affection on my part. I thought him, on the whole, a very extraordinary man; though much more to be admired for his ardent piety and lively imagination than for judgment or profundity. Even on his favourite topic of assurance he seemed sometimes to retract all that he had asserted. I did not hear him [preach;] but I learned afterward that his hearers generally went away with the impression of their having heard very new doctrine. If Dr. Malan has given the statement you have copied, I am heartily sorry for it, because it is *extremely* inaccurate, and must necessarily diminish the high regard in which I held him. Thus I have given you, my dear sir, a brief outline of what passed; and most earnestly wish you every degree of success in your labours to maintain the truth as it is in Jesus.

I am, dear and Rev. Sir,
With very high esteem, your affectionate Friend,
ROBERT HALL.

N. B.—Permit me to return my most sincere thanks for your admirable defence of the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ against Belsham: it will benefit the church, I trust, as long as the English language lasts.

## LXXXIII.

### TO W. B. GURNEY, ESQ.

ON THE DEATH OF MRS. GURNEY.

My dear Friend, *Bristol, August* 25, 1827.

It is a very few days since I heard the very melancholy intelligence of the removal of dear Mrs. Gurney; and I was not willing to obtrude on the sacred privacy of grief till its first agitation was in some measure subsided. Most *deeply* is this stroke felt, and long will continue to be so, by that very large circle of which she was the ornament and delight; but how much more severe the stroke on him who was united to her by the tenderest of earthly ties! To me the information was like a thunderclap: it was so sudden, and so unexpected, that I could scarcely persuade myself it was a reality; it seems now like one of those frightful visions of the night which vanish at the return of dawn.

Alas! how fresh in my mind is the figure of the dear deceased, presiding in the social circle with that inimitable ease, elegance, and grace which captivated every heart:—changed now, and clouded for ever with the shades of death! Never was a victim snatched by the great destroyer more beloved, or more lamented.

But why should I dwell on what is so distressing to remember, rather than advert to the brighter side of this melancholy picture? You, my dear friend, have lost the richest of earthly blessings in a most admirable and amiable wife; but grace has completed its triumph in adding to the celestial choir one more spirit of "the just made perfect." Bright as she shone in her earthly sphere, her light was dim and obscure compared to that which now invests her. Her pure and celestial spirit has ascended to its native seat, where she "bears the name of her God on her forehead, and serves him day and night in his temple." Your loss, my dear friend, is her unspeakable gain; and your mind is too generous in your calmest moments to wish her hurled from her celestial elevation. Let a few more months and years revolve, and you will be reunited to part no more; the days of your mourning will be ended; the Lord will be to you (as he is already to the dear deceased) "your everlasting light, and your God your glory."

I hope you will not suffer the excess of grief so to absorb your mind as to shut out the consolations of piety, or the claims of duty. It is my earnest prayer that God himself may comfort you, and that he may be pleased so to sanctify this most heavy trial, that though "faint," you may be "still pursuing;" and that, though you "sow in tears," you may "reap in joy."

I beg to be most affectionately remembered to every branch of your family, as well as to all inquiring friends; and remain, with deep concern,

Your affectionate and sympathizing Friend,

ROBERT HALL.

## LXXXIV.

### TO EBENEZER FOSTER, ESQ.

My dear Sir, *Bristol, Jan.* 29, 1829.

I safely received your favour of the 20th instant. It gives me great pleasure to infer from your letter, that the health of your family, and particularly of your elder brother, is in a tolerable state.

The death of Mrs. —— must have been felt very severely by your excellent consort, to whom I beg to express a deep and sincere sympathy I was greatly affected when I heard of it, and shall ever carry with me a grateful and affectionate sense of the uniform kindness with which she treated me, as well as of the many amiable and interesting traits of her character. It would have given me pleasure to have been informed what were her views and feelings in the prospect of eternity: I hope she exhibited that state of mind, on the approach of that awful crisis, which must prevent surviving friends from "sorrowing as those who have no hope." I have lately heard with much concern of the alarming illness of my dear friend;—but have rejoiced to learn subsequently that considerable hopes are entertained of his recovery. While events of this nature present a striking commentary on the solemn declaration that "all flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the field," it is consoling to remember that "the word of the Lord endureth for ever;" and that, by the preaching of the gospel, it is more extensively promulgated than ever.

The intelligence you have just given me of the rapid extension of evangelical religion in Cambridge is highly gratifying; nor can I entertain any serious apprehension of ultimate injury resulting from thence to the dissenting interest. If something like competition should have the effect of giving increased momentum to the exertions of both parties, the public may be benefited, and both improved.

With respect to my health, I can say little that I could wish to say. Some small abatement of the violence and frequency of my old complaint has, I think, of late been experienced: but it is very inconsiderable; and the last night it prevented me getting a wink of sleep until after seven o'clock this morning. On this account, I can speak with no sort of confidence of my intended visit to Cambridge, further than this, that I feel a most *anxious* desire of enjoying it, and that nothing but absolute necessity will prevent me from making the attempt; and, as travelling on the outside is much the easiest to me, it will not be prudent to undertake it till the summer is tolerably advanced. I have little intelligence to communicate worthy of your attention. I continue to be very happy with my people, from whom I daily receive every demonstration of affection and respect. Our attendance is as good as I could wish; and we have added to the *Baptist* church,*

* To render this phrase intelligible to some readers, it may be proper to observe, that in the congregation at Broadmead there are two classes of persons who are associated in church-fellowship: one consists of those only who have been baptized in adult age, on a confession of faith; while the other consists jointly of such and of Pedobaptists. The former are "strict communion Baptists," and constitute *the Baptist church*: the latter furnish an example of "mixed communion."—Ed

during the last year, twenty-seven, and six are standing candidates for baptism. For these tokens of Divine presence I desire to be thankful. Mrs. Hall and my family are, through mercy, as well as usual; and join with me in most affectionate regards to every branch of your family, and to the Cambridge circle of friends in general. I beg to be most affectionately remembered to dear Mr. ——, and to assure him of my deep sympathy with him under his heavy and irreparable loss It is my fervent and sincere prayer it may be sanctified.

I remain, my dear Sir,
Your obliged and affectionate Friend,
ROBERT HALL.

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## LXXXV.

### TO JAMES NUTTER, ESQ., SHELFORD, NEAR CAMBRIDGE

My very dear Friend, *Bristol, Feb.* 16, 1829.

I heard with much concern of your late alarming illness, and, with a proportionate degree of joy of your partial recovery, and of the pleasing prospect presented of your yet surviving for years, to be a blessing to your family and connexions. It grieves me much to learn from Mr. Price, that you have experienced something like a relapse, and that your situation is considered still critical and precarious. However the Lord may dispose of you (though it is my earnest prayer that your days may be prolonged to a distant period), I cannot adequately express my satisfaction at finding you are favoured with such an experience of the consolations of religion, as to enable you to comfort your sorrowing friends, and to bear so glorious a testimony to the power and grace of the Redeemer. O, my dear friend, how precious is a merciful Saviour in the eyes of a dying sinner! When the heart and flesh fail, he can adopt the triumphant language of Simeon, and say, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." You will never, my dear friend, to all eternity, be able sufficiently to magnify the riches of Divine grace, in adopting you into the family of the Redeemer, and making you "an heir of glory."

I earnestly hope the spectacle they have witnessed will have a most beneficial effect upon the younger branches of your family, in confirming pious resolutions, and convincing of the emptiness, the nothingness, of all which the world admires, compared to an interest in Christ, and a preparation for heaven. In the prospect of life there are *many* things which are adapted to animate and support; in the near approach of death, there is but "the hope of glory." It is my earnest prayer that this hope may shed its brightest beams on the mind of my dear and highly esteemed friend. As to myself, my health is in such a state that I can say nothing of the future; but your wishes will be with me

so far a law, that if my complaint will permit me during the early part of the summer, I shall accede to Mr. Price's request, by officiating at the opening of his meeting-house.

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Earnestly praying that every blessing may be communicated to you which a covenant God has to bestow, I remain

Your most affectionate Friend and Brother,

ROBERT HALL.*

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## LXXXVI.

### TO EBENEZER FOSTER, ESQ., CAMBRIDGE.

My dear Sir, *Bristol, Feb. 5*, 1831.

I acknowledge not sooner answering yours.

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I have little or no intelligence to communicate, further than that our city is much agitated by political discussion and the strife of parties. A meeting was lately held of the friends of reform, to petition on its behalf; but it was most stormy and tempestuous. Though all concurred in the general object, violent disputes arose on minor points, which distracted the discussion, and rendered it a scene of tumult and uproar. Such, of late, has been the general character of public meetings at Bristol. For my part, I never attend them. Indeed, the complaint in my back renders it impossible for me to stand; and to lie down would neither be decent or practicable.

Conversation is almost entirely occupied by the all-absorbing theme of politics; nor is it to be wondered at, when we consider the equivocal and anomalous state of this and of almost all other countries. Some great crisis appears to be approaching, which will probably shake Europe to its centre, and produce some entire new order of things. Shall we ultimately escape a war? I have great confidence in the pacific views of our present ministry, but less in their continuing in power; nor do I perceive what measures they can adopt that will materially alleviate the distress of the lower orders; and, unless this can be done, a [great convulsion] is, I fear, inevitable. At all events, one great source of consolation remains: "the Lord reigneth; and blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

By-the-way, it gives me pleasure to find that attempts are making in London to dissolve the union between the orthodox and the Socinian [dissenters.] I most heartily wish them success. It is a most unnatural and preposterous union, and tends, above any thing else, to give an imposing air of importance to the Socinian [party,] which, but for this coalition, would sink into insignificance. It is odious in the eyes of

* This letter did not reach Shelford until the day after the death of the excellent individual to whom it was addressed.—ED

pious churchmen, and tends to throw a disguise over the real state of the dissenters, in relation to their religious tenets. But I must close, and am afraid I have already occupied too much of your valuable time.

Mrs. Hall and my family are in tolerable health, and desire to unite with me in most affectionate regards to you and your family, and to your deaf brother and his family, Mr. —— and his lady, &c. &c. I would just add, that I [derived] considerable benefit, in relation to the determination of blood to the lungs, [from] my visit to Cheltenham.

I remain, my dear Sir,
Your most affectionate and obliged Friend,
ROBERT HALL.*

* This letter was written only four days before Mr. Hall's last illness, and sixteen before his death.—ED.

# SERMONS

# SERMONS.

## I.

### THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE DIVINE NATURE.

ISAIAH xxxi. 3.—*The Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit.**

[PREACHED AT CAMBRIDGE, APRIL 14, 1822, AND AT BRISTOL IN AUGUST, 1824.]

AMONG the sins to which the ancient Israelites were addicted, one of the most prevailing was, a disposition, in seasons of invasion or calamity, to place confidence in the power of surrounding nations, and to seek the assistance of their sovereigns, instead of trusting in the living God. By this they frequently incurred Divine chastisement, and in some instances even Divine dereliction. Egypt, being the largest monarchy in their immediate neighbourhood, was frequently their refuge in times of distress and difficulty. Their guilt in thus departing from God was greatly aggravated, on account of the intimate relation to them which he sustained as their king and sovereign, by virtue of which he had engaged to protect them by his mighty power so long as they adhered to his service and allegiance; while the frequent manifestation of his uncontrollable dominion over the natural world displayed in the signal deliverances he had wrought for them, rendered the transfer of their confidence from him to "an arm of flesh" equally criminal and foolish. "Wo to them," saith the prophet, "that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord!"† Then in a strain of pointed irony he severely reproves their preference, by reminding them that God possessed those qualities of foresight and force which justified entire dependence; and that whatever grounds for confidence they fancied to exist in the character of the Egyptian potentate, were found in a degree infinitely greater in that of the Almighty—"Yet he also is wise, and will bring evil, and

* Printed from the notes of Joshua Wilson, Esq. See p. 16-19, for Mr. Hall's brief notes of the same sermon.

† Isaiah xxxi. 1.

will not call back his words" (alluding to the conduct of Pharaoh, who had often broken the promises and violated the engagements he had made): "but will arise against the house of the evil-doers, and against the help of them that work iniquity." He will not only arise against the workers of iniquity, but against their helpers also; and will cause them all to fail together; "for the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit." In these words we are reminded of an important and infinite disparity between God and man; arising from a great peculiarity in the character of the former, which rendered the Egyptian monarch and his cavalry infinitely inferior to Him in power, and all those other qualities which entitle the possessor of them to confidence and trust.

It is my design to suggest to you some of those views of the character of the Supreme Being, inseparably connected with the spirituality of his nature, wherein he stands contrasted with all other beings whatever.

I. The spirituality of the Deity is intimately connected with the possession of that infinite unlimited power which renders him the proper object of entire confidence.

There is a vulgar prejudice in favour of matter and against spirit, as if the former were possessed of great force, while the latter is only invested with a feeble degree of energy. Hence, in contemplating the operations of the elements of nature producing great and important changes, we are apt to think of matter, and of matter in its most gross and palpable form. This prejudice arises from our mistaking secondary and remote effects for causes, allowing them therefore to terminate our view, instead of ascending from those laws of nature which God has established, to himself the supreme cause. These changes certainly indicate the existence of great power, which, at the first view, we are apt to connect with the material part of the system. We are also acquainted in a measure with the mechanical forces, and, seeing that these are exerted through the medium of matter, we are thence led to suppose that to be the source of power. We find that we are incapable of operating on matter, of moving even an atom by a mere act of our will; a material medium is necessary to enable us to produce the slightest change on the objects of nature; and if a material substance is brought to bear upon them, the most important effects are produced. We have no power of operating on the objects immediately around us, but by means of our bodies; and the changes that take place are always connected with certain motions in them, which enable us to come into contact with the visible world. Hence we are apt to terminate our ideas of power in matter. But in these cases it is *mind*, and mind alone, which is the seat of power. The influence which our bodies have upon other bodies, whereby their relative position is changed, is merely a secondary effect—an effect of that act of will which produces the motion of our bodies. The power by which all changes are effected through the instrumentality of the body resides immediately in the mind. It is that mysterious principle, called Will, which the Divine Being has invested with a control over the various

parts of our bodies; nor have we power to alter the state of a single external thing, in the least degree, except by means of volition, which is a mental power, operating immediately upon the body. No other account can be given of this capacity, but that the Divine Being has endowed us with instantaneous control over the muscular parts of our bodies. We can conceive nothing intermediate between the act of the will and the movement of the muscles. So complete indeed is the dominion of mind over matter, that the moment we will a certain motion in the body, it takes place, and thus only are we enabled to effect changes in the system of surrounding nature. We probably derive our idea of power from the changes we see effected in this manner; but all these changes resolve themselves into acts of the will. It is therefore plain that power resides in the *mind*, and that matter is in these respects only the instrument of mind, which in the first instance acts, which alone properly acts, and becomes the author of all the subsequent changes. Mind, indeed, to a certain extent, and within a certain sphere, is absolute power; and whatever motions it wills instantly take place. Though we are far from supposing for a moment that the Divine Being is the soul of the universe, or that he bears the same relation to the visible world as the soul does to the body—a notion replete with absurdity and impiety; yet the power which the mind exerts over the whole of our corporeal system may afford an apt illustration of that control which the Deity exercises over the universe. We will a certain motion in the muscles of our body, and immediately it takes place; nothing is perceived to intervene between the act of the will and the subsequent motion. By the mysterious constitution of our nature, we are capable, from a very early period of life, of putting into instantaneous motion the right set of muscles for producing a certain change; but nothing intervenes between the volition and the change. In vain do we inquire how this takes place because we can find nothing which comes between the operation of the will and the change produced in our corporeal frame.

Conceive the Divine Being as a spirit, having the same dominion over the invisible universe, in every part of space, as that which our minds possess over every portion of our bodies; and then you will perceive, faintly at least, the origin of that power the indications of which are so visible throughout the universe. He has only to will the most important changes, and they are instantly accomplished. "He speaks, and it is done; he commands, and it stands fast." "He said, Let there be light, and there was light." No causes intervene between the volition and the change which ensues, for the will of the Deity is itself the effect. Being an infinite Spirit, and coming into immediate contact with all parts of the universe, he is capable, by a mere act of will, of effecting all possible changes in the same manner, but in an infinitely higher degree, as we are capable, by an act of our will, of causing certain motions in the muscular parts of our body, and thus producing changes in the external objects around us.

We shall find it impossible to give any account of innumerable changes which are continually taking place in the visible world, with-

out tracing them up to mind. There cannot be a clearer proof of a Deity than the existence of motion. This evidently appears not to be essential to matter, because we see a very great portion of the material universe without it. Not being therefore an original state of matter, but merely an incident, it must be an effect. But since matter, not being intelligent, cannot be the cause of its own motion, and yet we cannot conceive of any atom beginning to move without a cause, that cause must be found out of itself. Whatever may be the nearest cause, or the number of secondary causes, though innumerable portions of matter may be reciprocally moved,—though the series of links in the chain through which motion is propagated may be indefinitely multiplied,—we must, in order to arrive at the origin of these various phenomena, ascend to mind, terminate our inquiries in spirit; nor can we account for the beginning, much less for the continuance and extension of motion, unless we trace it to the will of that Being who is the cause of all causes—the great original mover in the universe. Power is, therefore, the attribute of mind; instrumentality that of body. When we read in the Old Testament of the most exalted achievements ascribed to angelic spirits, we cannot suppose that it is owing to any gross materialism which they possess; on the contrary, they have no bodies capable of being investigated by our senses; and in proportion as they are more attenuated do they possess greater power. We have reason to believe that all finite minds are under the direction of the Supreme Power, who, without destroying their accountability or interfering with their free agency, makes all their operations subservient to the accomplishment of his counsels. Hence all opposition to the Deity is beautifully represented by Isaiah, as if the instrument should rebel against him that wields it, as if "the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up;" or "the staff should lift up itself against him that is no wood."* All created beings, in this respect, are but instruments in the hand of the Deity, whose will is sovereign over them.

The Divine Being, as the great Father of Spirits, combines within himself all the separate energies found in the universe. He is the source, origin, and fountain of all power diffused through creation. The very minds which he has formed are kept in mysterious subordination, and can never overstep the bounds he has assigned them. "Once have I heard this, that power belongs unto God."

II. The spirituality of God stands in close and intimate connexion with his invisibility, or that property by which he is completely removed from the notice of our senses, especially that of sight.

This is one of the perfections claimed by him in sacred writ, one of the attributes which the Scriptures perpetually ascribe to him. He is styled by the apostle Paul, the "King eternal, immortal, *invisible*," —"the blessed and only Potentate,"—"*whom no man hath seen, nor can see.*"† "*No man*," said our Saviour, "*hath seen the Father at any time.*" He is the *invisible God*. Were he the object of sight he

* Isaiah x. 15; Bishop Lowth's translation. † 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16.

must be limited. Whatever manifestations he may make of himself, it is utterly impossible that his essence, or He himself, should ever be the object of our corporeal sensations; for these extend only to visible and sensible objects. He cannot therefore be represented to the human imagination, or be figured out by any art or skill of man, agreeably to the sublime discourse of the apostle to the Athenians.* He was pleased, indeed, in former times, to afford to his ancient people in the wilderness, and afterward in the tabernacle and the temple, some outward tokens of his presence; but these were not any display of his essence. Moses, when warning the people against forming any graven image, or picture of the Deity, expressly declares that they "saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto them in Horeb."† The third commandment contains an express injunction against exhibiting any representation of the Deity to the eyes of mankind. Hence we may perceive the great impiety of those sects of Christians in different parts of the world, especially of the Church of Rome, who have attempted to paint and figure out the persons of the Trinity, in express contradiction to this divine edict, "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image,"‡ &c.

The worship of that erroneous and idolatrous church consists very much in acts of homage paid to these external representations; and, though her advocates profess that they are offered to God through them as media, are too often, we cannot but fear, terminated upon them, and thus supplant that spiritual worship which the Divine Being claims in consequence of his being a spirit. We need not wonder, therefore, at the pains taken by that church to suppress the second commandment; entirely omitting that precept in some of her formularies, and dividing another commandment into two, to make up the number ten. The necessary effect of any attempt to exhibit the Deity to the human senses by pictures or images, must be to degrade, to an incalculable degree, our conceptions of him; partly as it circumscribes what is unlimited, and partly as it is adapted to mingle the passions and affections of the human nature with our conception of the Divine. The notion of an Infinite Being is utterly inconsistent with any outward figure or shape, which would confine, to a certain determinate portion of space, Him who declares of himself, "*Do not I fill heaven and earth?*" and thus limit the infinite presence and majesty of the great Eternal. No sooner do men attempt to make the Deity an object of their senses, than they begin to think him altogether such a one as themselves. Descending from the high and holy place where the Divine Being dwells, the mind, accustomed to contemplate him under a visible form, gradually sinks lower and lower in approximation to its own level, till at last men come to conceive of him as compassed with infirmities like themselves. Hence, where such representations of Deity have prevailed, images of other beings, more suited to their gross taste, have been introduced: at first angels; but at length, by a natural process, the chief place in their religious affections has

* Acts xvii. 24-29. † Deut. iv. 15. ‡ Exod. xx. 4, 5.

become occupied by the Virgin Mary, and other saints of inferior character, who have received much greater abundance of these marks of devotion and homage than the Supreme Being himself. So impossible is it for the Church of Rome to purge itself from the charge of that idolatry which the Scriptures most severely denounce. Were there no other reason to deter persons from the communion of that church, her profane tampering with the very elements of devotion, and poisoning the first principles of religion, were alone sufficient to inspire all true Christians with the utmost abhorrence. For the same authority which forbids the transfer of worship from a right to a wrong object, also stigmatizes all deviation from the prescribed standard, in the manner of worshipping the Divine Being himself. Could we see nothing of a tendency to lead on to greater abominations in this "chamber of imagery," till it terminate in hero and idol worship, nay, in the worship of wood and stone, it is expressly forbidden; and this prohibition is alone sufficient to stamp it with the character of impiety.

III. That God is a spirit, and not flesh, is inseparably connected with his immensity and omnipresence, or the capacity of being present in all parts of his creation.

Omnipresence is an attribute which both reason and scripture teach us to ascribe to the Deity, and which he repeatedly assumes to himself: "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord."* "Whither," says the Psalmist, "shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."† We are taught to believe that the essence of the Divine Being is diffused over all space—that there is not an atom existing in its boundless extent which he does not fill with his presence and energy. Were his nature material this could not be, for the following reasons:

1. It is necessary that matter should have some *figure*, without which we cannot even conceive it to exist, whether we regard it as a whole, and include the aggregate of material substances, or look at the several portions of which that aggregate consists, and contemplate its parts as having a separate existence. Figure seems essential to the conception of all matter; but that which has any assignable figure must be circumscribed within a certain outline; there must, then, be some point of space where it terminates, and where vacuity begins, consequently it must be limited. To conceive, therefore, of the Divine Being as material, would be to involve ourselves in absurdity; for

* Jer. xxiii. 23, 24. † Ps. cxxxix. 7–12

matter infinitely extended implies a contradiction, by uniting two opposite and irreconcilable suppositions.

2. If matter were unlimited there would be no possibility of motion; but this is a supposition contrary to fact and experience; for we perceive that motion everywhere exists. It is obvious that there could be no motion unless there were some space not previously occupied by body. In a perfect plenum, motion would be impossible, because there would be no possibility of conceiving that space into which the first moving body might pass.

3. If the Divine Being were material, it would be impossible that he should be infinite in his essence, fill all space, penetrate all substances, pervade all minds; because, on that supposition, he would render impossible the co-existence of created beings. We cannot conceive of two portions of matter occupying the same part of space. Were the Deity therefore material, he must exclude from the space he occupies all other matter; and since he is infinite, that exclusion must be perfect and entire: but this, being contrary to physical fact, is certainly contrary to intellectual truth. Whereas God, being a spirit, subsists in a totally different manner from all material substances; his manner of existence being altogether peculiar to himself, and such as we cannot adequately conceive. It follows, however, that any material substance and the Divine Being are capable of being present in the same place, at the same time, without destroying each other's properties and attributes. Such a Being also can be equally present at one and the same moment in innumerable myriads of worlds, and to all parts of the universe . . . . .

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The Infinite Spirit is present with every part of his creation, as intimately as the soul of man is present throughout all the parts of that corporeal substance which it animates and sustains. His essence is diffused over all space. He is intimately present with all his creatures, as intimately as they are to themselves, is perfectly acquainted with the thoughts of all intelligent beings, unites himself with the very constitution of their nature. They exist within the grasp of his omnipotence, within the perpetual comprehension of his presence, within the sphere of his energy, and the light of his countenance. "In him they live, and move, and have their being." We frequently speak of God dwelling in the world, by the manifestations of his power and providence; but it may with equal truth be said, that the world dwells in God; all creatures being surrounded by his presence, and enclosed in his essence. We cannot for a moment conceive of such a being as separated from any part of the universe, or point of space: all creatures, spiritual and material, subsist in Him who, maintaining his own separate existence distinct from the external world, exercises absolute universal dominion over all the beings he has formed. This particular property of his nature, this peculiar mode of his existence, renders him capable of being the all-comprehending God, of holding in his own hand all the innumerable creatures he has formed.

IV. Because God is a spirit, and not flesh, he is possessed of infinite wisdom and intelligence.

This seems to be a necessary property of that Being, who, himself unbounded and filling all things, must be present to all his creatures at all times, with the same plenitude of perfection as at the first moment of their creation. We cannot conceive for a moment of any interval between him and them, which might exclude them from his view. They must ever be in immediate contact with him, and the objects of his perpetual vision. He is not obliged to change his place in order to observe and take cognizance of them. This presence of God with his creatures being infinite and eternal, his infinite acquaintance with them seems to be a necessary consequence. He that formed all things does not quit any portion of his vast empire when he retires to "the high and secret place of his sanctuary:" he needs not to vary his position towards his creatures, in order to obtain a more advantageous situation, or catch the benefit of changing lights, for the purpose of making a more accurate scrutiny of any of them! Every one is as much within his survey at one moment as at another; he is continually present to them, with the same plenitude of power as that which was exerted in their formation out of nothing. Every movement, both of spirit and matter, is performed "in him," and must therefore be immediately within his notice. It is impossible that any thing should elude or escape the light of his countenance, or that any darkness should cover from his view those beings which he has created. Hence he is perfectly acquainted with the thoughts of all hearts, and the secret springs of all the actions of his rational intelligent creatures. We are obliged to judge of men's character by their actions; he judges of their actions by their motives: we can only trace the streams, and by them judge of the fountain whence they proceed; he penetrates the hidden spring and source: we form a few conjectures of what is passing in man, by the outward exhibitions of his conduct; he, in consequence of the knowledge he possesses of the very constitution of those beings who have been called into existence by his divine power, detects at once the secret springs of all their actions.—"Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh at the heart." He qualifies all our actions by immediate attention to the motives whence they proceed: the *motive* is that which determines the action in his sight, and his judgment is always according to truth. "By him actions are weighed." While we are continually liable to be mistaken, and our judgments and censures, often rash and misplaced, are always uncertain; his eye pierces the thickest shades of darkness. The gloom of midnight and the splendour of noon are only distinctions with respect to us; in regard to him, there is no difference: "With him the night shineth as the day, the darkness and the light are both alike to him." There can be no folly therefore so great as for a creature to attempt to conceal himself from the inspection and scrutiny of his Maker. He is within us: "in him we live, and move, and have our being." We need no other proof that he knows the secrets of the heart, than that he is present with its most hidden recesses. Hence, in the Psalm

already referred to, the Psalmist infers his infinite cognizance of his creatures, from the fact of his incessant and intimate presence with them. The infinite knowledge which God has of his works is indeed inseparably connected with this part of his character. As the Infinite Spirit—the great Father of spirits—he is the source of all the intelligence and wisdom which exist in created spirits. He must be perfectly acquainted with all the operations and results of all other minds, since he has constituted them, and they are entirely the effect of his own intelligence and wisdom. When the heathen world lost sight of the spirituality of God, they also lost sight of his omniscience; and after gradually sinking lower in proportion as they receded farther from that view of his character, their notions of him became at length so debased that they invested him with a corporeal form. The spirituality of the Divine nature, having been attested by the Saviour, and made one of the principles of his religion, has raised the conceptions of the human mind far beyond what the greatest philosophers could previously attain; and enabled children to surpass, in both spiritual and intellectual illumination, the sages of pagan antiquity.

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V. The doctrine of the spirituality of the Divine nature establishes a most intimate relation between him and all his intelligent creatures: it becomes a bond of the most subtile union between himself and the intellectual part of the creation.

He stands in close and intimate relation to all creatures: their dependence on him is absolute, their subjection to him constant and incessant; but in a special manner is he the Father of spirits. The relation between father and child is very intimate, but that between God and man is much more so. An earthly parent is but the instrument, God is the author of our existence; one is the father of the flesh, the other of the spirit. In proportion as the spirit is the most important part of human nature, this relation which we sustain to God is most essential, interesting, and extensive. The body connects us with the material universe around us; the soul connects us immediately with the Deity. At death, the body returns to the earth, its native element; "the spirit returns to God, that gave it." The body has a tendency to separate us from God by the dissimilarity of its nature; the soul, on the contrary, unites us again to him by means of those principles and faculties which, though infinitely inferior, are of a character congenial with his own. The body is the production of God, the soul is his image. . . . . .

To estrange ourselves from God is therefore to be guilty of a new and most enormous kind of offence: it is forgetting our proper parent,—losing our great portion, the very source of our existence. To love him, to seek union with him in the closest manner possible, is to return to our proper original,—to seek Him from whom all our powers are derived, and by whom alone they can be sustained in time, and must be consummated and completed in eternity. If you were to see a person manifest no desire for the presence of an earthly parent, you would be shocked at the spectacle, and would be ready

to represent him as a prodigy of ingratitude. How much more would it affect a well-constituted mind to behold a creature seeking estrangement from his Heavenly Parent—living in forgetfulness of Him! This would appear matter of the greatest astonishment were men to withdraw themselves from sensible objects, and retire into their own minds for the purpose of serious reflection. The prophet calls on heaven and earth to sympathize with him in this emotion: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me."*

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VI. The spirituality of the Divine nature renders him capable of the exalted prerogative of being the satisfying portion, the supreme good of all intelligent beings.

It is in consequence of being a spirit that he is properly fitted to be the Supreme Good; not merely the dispenser of those outward benefits which gratify the corporeal appetites, and sustain our transitory state in this world; not only the author, but the immediate source, the very element of our happiness—in consequence of those properties of his nature which are congenial with our own. Many are willing to acknowledge their dependence on the power and providence of God for those good things the possession of which the world calls happiness, such as riches, honours, pleasures; they expect to be made happy by means of his influence over inferior creatures, exerted in putting things in a train for that purpose. But the devout man ascends to God himself, as the source and spring of happiness, in the contemplation of whom, and in whose friendship and love, consists eternal life: he regards him as the highest good, the source of felicity to the intelligent universe, the very principle of good. The Psalmist recognised the Divine Being under this character, and he has been so recognised by the faithful in every age and every nation; "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him."† We find holy men casting their eyes round upon all that is in heaven and on earth .... then collecting all into one great aggregate, and solemnly relinquishing the whole, trampling it in the dust, in order to ascend to God and rest in his love. "Whom," says the Psalmist, "have I in heaven but *thee*, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee; my flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever. My soul thirsteth for God, my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." To know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, this, this is life eternal. The Divine Being not only sustains towards us the character of a governor, ruling our wills by his holy law, but is also the chief object of our affections; and we never know him aright till we feel thus towards him, till we obey him from the heart, perceiving in him that which is suited to the nature of our immortal minds, and resting in him as our eternal and

* Isaiah i. 2. † Lam. iii. 24, 25; Psalm lxxiii 25, 26

unchanging portion. If you do not ascend as high as this, you will never find any rest for your soul; you will wander through eternity restless and unsatisfied: "The height will say, It is not in me; and the depth, It is not in me;" and every voice will answer us with scorn unless we listen to that which now issues from the secret presence of the Almighty; "acquaint thyself with *me*, and be at peace." All that we can derive from creatures is partial, scanty, limited, and precarious; and even that is the effect of his power, the fruit of his munificence: but with Him is the fountain of life, "in his presence is fulness of joy, at his right hand are pleasures for evermore." He manifests himself to his people, as he does not to the world. The communion they enjoy with the Father of their spirits forms an essential part of the experience of all real Christians. How intimately this is connected with the spirituality of the Divine nature will appear, if you consider a few things which naturally arise from a view of the present subject.

1. That which constitutes the felicity of the mind must be something out of it. Whoever retires into his own mind for happiness will soon find himself miserable; he will feel imprisoned till he is permitted to go forth and unite himself in affection and confidence to something out of himself. Hence those who are most insulated, and cut off from all contact with others, are styled, by way of distinction, *misers*, and are truly the most miserable of men. There cannot be a greater picture of abject wretchedness than a man, entirely confined to himself, possessing none of those sensibilities which attach mind to mind, and heart to heart,—a stranger to that reciprocation of feeling and affection between kindred minds which is the very balm of life. But where shall we find, out of ourselves, that which is not, like ourselves, changing, uncertain, and liable to decay, except in God, the Eternal Spirit, who, being essentially incorruptible and immortal, is qualified to be the everlasting, inexhaustible spring of satisfaction to all his intelligent creatures? In fellowship with him may be enjoyed to the uttermost all that is tender and delightful in the emotions which friendship is adapted to inspire, at the same time that in the contemplation of all those great and excellent qualities which elevate and dignify his character, may be awakened the awe which vastness and power are fitted to excite; and both together may well be supposed capable of filling the mind with a calm and peaceful rapture to eternity. If the friendship of a fellow-creature be capable of affording such exquisite delight, how divine a delectation must flow from union of heart with the Deity!

2. He who can always confer happiness on another being must be superior to that being. To be the source of happiness is the highest prerogative, the greatest pre-eminence, that one being can possess over another; it is, in fact, to be his God. It is plain that we must look higher than ourselves, and trust to the intervention of a power greatly superior to our own, for the source and perpetuity of our happiness. Hence the Psalmist prays, "When my heart is overwhelmed within me, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I." The

Divine Being possesses this qualification in the highest degree: he is the Infinite Spirit; to Him alone it belongs to say to any created being, "I will be thy God." . . . . . He only is capable of bestowing and assuring true, permanent, unchanging felicity, at all periods, and through all duration; of doing, in short, "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." The earth, in this respect, with all its riches, is indigent; even the splendour of immortality is dark, as to any power capable of guiding man to happiness, independently of the Great Eternal. It belongs to him as the Father of spirits; for he alone possesses that power and dominion over all beings which is necessary in order to render him the portion and happiness of his people.

3. That in which the happiness of a rational and mental creature consists must be congenial to the nature of that creature. The body may be made happy by corporeal objects, adapted to gratify its senses; mind can never be made happy except by mental objects. It rejects with contempt and disdain all sensible delights as its portion. The understanding must be satisfied with the light of truth, or we cannot, as rational creatures, be free from disquietude; the affections must be satisfied in the lovely qualities of character, before the heart can find rest. Where these requisites are wanting, men often languish in the midst of plenty; though surrounded by the means of enjoyment, cast a lingering, despairing view around; and sometimes feel disposed to envy those inferior creatures which are placed beneath the level of rationality. But the mental and spiritual excellences and perfections requisite to constitute the adequate portion of mental and spiritual beings, can only be found in God, who must therefore be the proper good of a thinking creature.

4. That which forms the principle of our felicity must be something that is capable of communicating itself to us. Creatures solely material are entirely incapable of doing this. Sensual pleasures can never reach our interior nature: they are not sufficiently subtile to constitute the source of delight to the mind; they touch only the grosser elements of our susceptibility, and do not penetrate sufficiently deep to be the proper basis of our enjoyment. But God, as he is a Spirit, is capable of communicating himself to the spirits of his rational creatures. Spirit naturally comes into contact with spirit; and this communication of himself is infinitely easy to the Divine Being. He can manifest himself to the hearts of his people, disclose the glory of his name to them more and more, open perpetually fresh views of his character, give them fresh sensations of ineffable delight in the contemplation of his excellence, lead them forward from one department of his perfections to another, and make the whole creation itself speak forth his praises. Thus may he accumulate the materials of ceaseless rapture to eternity; elevating his worshippers perpetually in adoration, at the same time that he lays them lower in prostration before him. Hence we are taught in the Scriptures to believe that these communications and disclosures of himself by the Deity will constitute the felicity of heaven—this intimate union between the hearts of his

creatures and his own essential character, there described as the vision of God, or the intuitive knowledge of him as a Spirit, will form the principal ingredient of future happiness. Our Saviour represents himself as the source of this happiness: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."* The apostle Paul, also, speaking of the perfection of the happiness of heaven, describes it as resulting from the immediate sight of the Divine glory. "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then shall we see face to face; now I know in part, then shall I know even as also I am known."

Even while they continue on earth, it is the privilege of the faithful to enjoy that union and alliance with the Father of spirits, through his Son, by virtue of which they become one spirit. They are, at some favoured seasons, so filled, even to overflowing, with a sense of his love, that the wilderness appears more beautiful than the peopled city. At such seasons, though all the evils that afflict the flesh may attempt to assail the immortal mind, he can be so present to the heart, and impart to the soul such ecstasies of enjoyment, as will more than overpower the violence of pain, and even prevail over the agonies of death.

We now proceed to a brief practical improvement of the subject before us:—

Let us, in contemplating the Divine Being, endeavour to raise ourselves above the association of our minds with what is sensible, visible, and corporeal, and retire within our own nature; not for the purpose of seeking happiness there, but that we may feel our necessity of God, and perceive the demand which the highest powers of our nature make for such a being, and the impossibility of their finding rest but in his knowledge, obedience, and love. The natural effect of communion with ourselves is to convince us of our own emptiness and nothingness, at the same time that it indicates our native grandeur, inasmuch as there is nothing that can constitute our rational portion but God. In your calmest moments, my brethren, you will find that you possess an understanding capable of contemplating God, and that He only can be an adequate object to engage and employ that understanding, because he is the only being capable of affording to you light, happiness, and life, through a boundless eternity. You possess a conscience, which gives a moral character to all your actions, tinctures with an evil of its own peculiar kind (the evil of guilt) whatever it condemns, and invests with an attribute of moral beauty and rectitude whatever it approves: whence you will perceive that you never can be happy till conscience is on your side, till the character of your actions and thoughts is such as will bear the review of that inward monitor. To produce this effect is to harmonize a man with his own conscience,—to bring him to be at peace with himself, because at peace with God—to place him on a moral centre, where he can rest self-poised amid all the fluctuations of the external world. You will find within you susceptibility which recoils from pain, and thirsts for pleasures; not merely those that are

* John xvii. 24.

corporeal in their nature, but also mental and intellectual, such as those which we taste in friendship, and in the contemplation of virtue and truth. Hence you will perceive that you never can be truly and eternally happy till these affections have an adequate object; and that never will be found except in the supreme, eternal, original Spirit. He alone can so communicate himself to you, and give you such a knowledge of his character, and such a sense of his friendship, as will render you in a great measure independent of all earthly objects. You will perceive that he is fitted to be himself the sole and exclusive object of all these powers; you will see the propriety and beauty of that exclamation—"Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire in comparison of thee."

Since God is a Spirit, and we are principally distinguished by possessing a rational and immortal nature, there must be an everlasting connexion established between him and us,—either favourable or injurious, of reward or punishment, of mercy or justice,—on which will depend our destiny for ever. There must be a meeting of all finite spirits in the presence of the infinite original Spirit, when an account must be given to God of "the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or evil." Your happiness must eternally consist in the favour of that Being to whom you are perpetually responsible for all the sentiments of your heart, and all the actions of your life. If you die in a state of disobedience, impenitence, and alienation from God, you will incur the doom denounced against those whom our Saviour threatened, that if they believed not in him, but rejected his mission and authority, they should die in their sins. A more awful denunciation who can conceive?—"If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins; and whither I go ye cannot come."

The consequence will be, that the Being whom you have neglected and forgotten will be the constant and eternal source of your misery. You will sink under his frown; separation from him will be the great cause of your anguish; you will be vessels of his wrath; you will have fitted yourselves, by contempt of the supreme authority, and alienation from the supreme good, to be for ever in a state of wretchedness, because of separation from Him who is "the fountain of living water."

Since God is a Spirit, and we are unable of ourselves to rise so high as to attain the favour and friendship of such a Being, whose entirely spiritual nature is so subtile that it eludes our unassisted conception; in order that the worship of the true God may be adapted to become the universal religion, Jesus Christ has come down to earth, has assumed human nature, imbodied the attributes of God in an incarnate form, and thus taught us the character of the Deity in his own actions. We know the principles of the Divine conduct in the government of the world, by the conduct and character of our blessed Saviour in his life. He is "the image of the invisible God," the only representation of Deity: "He that hath seen me," said he, "hath seen the Father." The design of his coming into this world was to bring back apostate creatures to his Father; "to make reconciliation for iniquity"

by the sacrifice of himself upon the cross; and thus to remove all those impediments which spring from the character of God to acceptance in his sight, and to restore them to the enjoyment of his eternal favour. He gave himself a sacrifice on the altar of justice, that a free passage might be opened to the favour of his heavenly Father without any impeachment of the Divine character: "that he might be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

What movements are in your minds, my brethren, with respect to this great object at this time? Are they stationary, or are they moving in a right or a wrong direction? Are you under the guidance of Christ, seeking increased acquaintance with him, aspiring after higher degrees of resemblance to him, fixing your hopes more firmly upon his promises? Then all things will be favourable to you; "the world, or life, or death, things present, or things to come, all are yours." You have obeyed from the heart the call of the gospel; you have forsaken the world; have become dead to it before you are called to leave it; and have laid up treasure in heaven, having trusted your souls for safety to the Divine Redeemer; "you know whom you have believed, and are persuaded that he is able to keep that which you have committed unto him until that day." But if your minds are engaged in a contrary direction; if you are seeking happiness in the things of this world, living in the neglect of God, never raising your thoughts to the contemplation of the Supreme Good,—if, having rejected the great salvation, you are content to lie under the weight of unacknowledged, and therefore unpardoned guilt,—yet, bear with me while I remind you that you must have a meeting with God; you must see the face of that Divine Being whose authority you have spurned, and feel the anger of that Divine Redeemer whom you have rejected. You will, if you persist in this course, hear him pronounce the fearful sentence, "Those mine enemies that would not have me to reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before me:" "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Blessed be God, there are those now present who are placing their affections habitually on the great Supreme, and uniting themselves, more and more closely, to him by faith in the Son of God. Let such persons rejoice in the prospects before them. The interruptions which arise from your corporeal state will speedily terminate; the flesh shall then no longer lust against the spirit, nor the spirit against the flesh; but you will "do the things that you would." You have preferred the interests of the mind to those of the body; the service of Jesus Christ, and the prospects of eternity, to all sublunary good. You are approaching nearer and nearer to the Chief Good; you are hungering and thirsting after righteousness; and you shall certainly be satisfied. God approves your choice, and will assist your infirmities; "he will strengthen you with all might by his Spirit in your inner man;" will "work in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure;" and enable you to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

"They that sow to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption

they that sow to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Let us make continual progress in Christian virtue. Every act of sin has a tendency to misery. Every effort to subdue corruption, and to live to the will of God, is a seed which, by God's grace, will bring forth fruit to everlasting life. By patient continuance in well-doing, let us seek for glory, honour, and immortality; for to such God will assuredly recompense eternal life: but to those that are disobedient, and do not obey the truth, "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish." "On the wicked he will rain fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup."*

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## II.

## THE GLORY OF GOD IN CONCEALING.

PROVERBS XXV. 2.—*It is the glory of God to conceal a thing.*†

[PREACHED AT CAMBRIDGE, SEPTEMBER, 1826.]

IT is difficult to say whether the glory of God appears more in what he displays, or in what he conceals, of his operations and designs. Were he to conceal every thing from our view, it would be impossible that any glory could result to him from the sentiments and actions of his creatures. From entire ignorance nothing could arise, no medium of intercourse could be established between the creature and the Creator. In the total absence of the knowledge of God, religion must be totally excluded and unknown. But it is by a partial communication of himself, which the Divine Being might, if he pleased, in various degrees extend and increase beyond the present measure, that he has in the highest degree consulted his honour and manifested his wisdom. If there were no light, we should sink into a state of irreligious doubt and despair; if there were no darkness, we should be in danger of losing that reverential sense of his infinite majesty so essential to religion, and of impiously supposing that the Almighty is such a one as ourselves. But a temperature of mingled light and obscurity, a combination of discovery and concealment, is calculated to produce the most suitable impressions of the Divine excellence on the minds of fallen creatures. When God was pleased to favour his ancient people with a supernatural display of his presence, by a visible symbol, during their journey through the wilderness, it wore this two-fold aspect: it was a pillar of cloud and of fire, dark in the daytime and luminous in the night; and when he conducted them through the Red Sea, he turned the bright side of the cloud towards the camp of

* Rom. ii. 7-9; Ps. xi. 6 † From the notes of Joshua Wilson, Esq.

Israel, and the gloomy side towards the Egyptians, by whom they were pursued.*

When he descended on Mount Sinai, the token of his presence was a mass of thick and dark clouds, penetrated at intervals by flashes of lightning. On the third day, in the morning, we are informed, there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount: and, it is added, "the mount was altogether in a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire, and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace." When Solomon had finished his temple, the manifestation which the Deity made of himself, in taking possession of it and consecrating it to his service, was of the same character. No sooner had the priest gone out of the holy place, than the cloud filled the house of the Lord; and "the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord." The first indication of the Divine presence was the overspreading of thick darkness, which afterward subsided, and unfolded itself gradually, till it terminated in an insufferable splendour. Upon observing this, Solomon, at the commencement of his celebrated prayer, used these words: "The Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness."† If God dwells in light inaccessible, he equally makes darkness his dwelling-place,—"his pavilion dark waters and thick clouds of the sky." "Clouds and darkness," says David, "are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." In this view of the character and dispensations of the Almighty, the Psalmist probably alludes to those sensible appearances of his presence which are recorded in his ancient oracles.

At our Saviour's transfiguration, the three disciples retained their composure until *the cloud* appeared; for they knew that to be the symbol of the immediate presence of the Deity. "*They feared*," we are told, "*when they entered into the cloud;*" and it was thence the voice proceeded, saying, "*This is my beloved Son, hear ye him.*" These representations are in perfect harmony with the doctrine of the passage under our present consideration, in which the wisest of men, speaking by inspiration, informs us that "it is the glory of God to conceal a thing." He does it with a design to promote his glory, being by necessity his own ultimate and final end.

There are two observations naturally suggested by these words:—

I. The Divine Being is accustomed to conceal much.

II. In this he acts in a manner worthy of himself, and suited to display his glory.

I. We shall specify some of the instances in which God conceals things.

1. In relation to his own nature and manner of existence.

His essence is altogether hidden from the most profound investigation, the most laborious research, the most subtile penetration of his creatures. With respect to this, it may be said, "Who by searching can find out God; who can find out the Almighty to perfection?" We know that he possesses certain attributes, (which we distinguish by

* Exod. xiv. 19, 20. † 1 Kings viii. 12.

different names drawn from analogous excellences among men), exclusive of all limit or imperfection found in human nature. We ascribe to him every idea of virtue and spiritual beauty, exalted to infinite perfection. But how the Divine Being himself exists in an essential and eternal nature of his own, without beginning as well as without end,—how he can be present at the same moment in every point of illimitable space, without excluding any one of his creatures from the room it occupies,—how, unseen, unfelt by all, he can maintain a pervading and intimate acquaintance and contact with all parts and portions of the universe,—how he can be at once all eye, all ear, all presence, all energy, yet interfere with none of the perceptions and actions of his creatures,—this is what equally baffles the mightiest and the meanest intellect; this is the great mystery of the universe, which is at once the most certain and the most incomprehensible of all things; —a truth at once enveloped in a flood of light and an abyss of darkness! Inexplicable itself, it explains all besides: it casts a clearness on every question, accounts for every phenomenon, solves every problem, illuminates every depth, and renders the whole mystery of existence as perfectly simple as it is otherwise perfectly unintelligible, while itself *alone* remains in impenetrable obscurity! After displacing every other difficulty, it remains the greatest of all, in solitary, unsurmountable, unapproachable grandeur! So truly "clouds and darkness are round about him." "He maketh darkness his secret habitation; his pavilion to cover him, thick clouds."

His perfections are impressed on the works of nature, but in such a manner that we learn them only by inference. We ascend from effects to causes; from the marks of contrivance and design, to the necessary existence of an Almighty Contriver. But what sort of being he is, and what is the nature of his contact with his creatures, must, in the present state at least, remain an unfathomable mystery. We are utterly at a loss in all such speculations; yet this affords no diminution of the motives of piety. Our belief in the being of a God is the belief of a profound mystery. The very idea of such a Being would appear incredible were it not that it is necessary, because the greatest absurdities would flow from supposing the contrary. Nothing can be accounted for unless we admit the existence of a causeless Cause—a presiding Governor of the universe. We are compelled therefore to choose the less difficulty of the two; or rather to choose difficulty instead of impossibility, mystery instead of absurdity: and hence we repose on this grand truth.

2. The Divine Being observes the same method of concealment in a great variety of respects, with regard to the structure and constitution of his *works*. The scenes of nature lie open to our view; they solicit our senses, and are adapted to impress themselves in a most lively manner upon our minds. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork." We cannot look around us without beholding, not only the works themselves, but evident traces of that matchless wisdom, power, and goodness whence they sprang. Still, the mysteries of nature, with regard to the

*essences* of things, and indeed to a multitude of subtile *operations*, are kept in a kind of sacred reserve, and elude the utmost efforts of philosophy to surprise them in their concealments and bring them to *light*. While Philosophy goes on from step to step in the march of her discoveries, it seems as if her grandest result was the conviction how much remains undiscovered; and while nations in a ruder state of science have been ready to repose on their ignorance and error, or to confound familiarity with knowledge, the most enlightened of men have always been the first to perceive and acknowledge the remaining obscurity which hung around them; just as, in the night, the farther a light extends, the wider the surrounding sphere of darkness appears. Hence it has always been observed, that the most profound inquirers into nature have been the most modest and humble. So convinced was Socrates, the chief luminary of the ancient world, of the great obscurity attending all such inquiries, that he abandoned the search of nature, and confined his disquisitions to moral questions, and rules for the conduct of life. The same illustrious man declared, that he knew no reason why the oracle of Delphos pronounced him to be the wisest of men, except it was that, being conscious of his ignorance, he was willing to confess that he knew nothing. Newton, the greatest philosopher whom the modern world has known, declared, speaking of a distinguished contemporary from whose genius he augured vast discoveries, but who died in early life, (the celebrated Cotes), "If that young man had lived, we should have known something." In so modest a manner did he advert to his own imperfect knowledge of that science with which he had attained such prodigious acquaintance as to have become the pride and wonder of the world! Those that have devoted themselves to an investigation of the laws of nature find, in a great variety of the most common productions, sufficient to engage their inquiries and employ their faculties: they perceive that the meanest work of God is inexhaustible,—contains secrets which the wisdom of man will never be able to penetrate. They are only some of the superficial appearances and sensible properties with which we are familiar. Substances and essences we cannot reach. The secret laws which regulate the operations of nature we cannot unveil. Indeed, we have reason to believe that the most enlarged understanding must, in a very short time, resolve its inquiries into the will of God as the ultimate reason. Thus, one of the best effects of intellectual cultivation and the acquisition of knowledge, is to restore the mind to that state of natural simplicity and surprise in which every thing above, beneath, and around us appears replete with mystery, and excites those emotions of freshness and astonishment with which the scenes of nature are contemplated during the season of childhood.

3. God is accustomed to conceal much in the dispensations of his providence. The dispensations of the Divine providence are that series of actions which the Divine Being is continually carrying on in the government of the world which he has made. This, though it presents many evident marks of wisdom and design, is also eminently

endowed with the property of obscurity. "*God is known by the judgments which he executeth.*" The established order of providence in this world makes manifest to every serious and reflecting mind, that "*there is verily a God that judgeth in the earth.*" There exists such a decided connexion between well-doing and happiness on the one hand, and between wickedness and misery on the other, as sufficiently to show, even independently of revelation, that the Divine Being is the patron of rectitude and the enemy of vice. Yet, while there is a prevailing tendency in virtue to promote happiness, this tendency is not always carried into actual effect. The natural course of things is frequently interrupted and suspended by incidental causes: particular exceptions are continually occurring to the ordinary rule.

There are two respects in which the Divine Being perpetually conceals the ways of his providence.

(1.) The design for which many events are permitted to take place.

There are many important circumstances and events, the reason of which will probably remain to the end of time altogether inscrutable: such, for instance, as the depression of the righteous; the success of fraud and violence; the frustration of the purposes of benevolence and virtue; the prevalence of persecution; the sufferings of martyrs, the limited diffusion of Christianity; the extent to which idolatry has been suffered to desolate the moral world; and the mystery of iniquity to overspread a large portion of Christendom. The best and wisest of men have confessed themselves at a loss to interpret the design of the Divine dispensations with respect to themselves and their contemporaries. Even prophets have acknowledged that their minds were for a time perplexed by the anomalies of providence: "Righteous art thou, O Lord," says Jeremiah, "yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore do the wicked prosper?" And David, when he reflected on the prosperity of the wicked, the unequal distribution of good and evil, and the afflictions to which the righteous were exposed, was tempted to exclaim, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain;" nor did he find any satisfaction until he went into the sanctuary of God, and there understood their latter end.

(2.) The Divine Being is accustomed to throw much obscurity over the future. He makes the present the scene of our duty, while he has, in a great degree, hidden futurity from our view. "We know not what shall be on the morrow;" we are ignorant of the next event that shall arise, and cannot, with all the light we can gather round us, determine what shall befall us on the next moment: we are impelled forward on the stream of time, but know not what is immediately before us. This ignorance of the future is complete with respect to the period of our own lives. Our existence this moment is no security for its continuance the next: "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." It is always a matter of awful uncertainty when we enter on the business of the day, whether we shall close it in time or eternity; when we compose

our eyes to slumber, in which world we shall open them. The future is ever in the hand of God. No man can say with confidence that any one scheme he is pursuing shall be attended with success,—any one hope or fear which he entertains be realized. Every period of our life is opening some fresh page, the contents of which no human sagacity can determine; nor is there a single event that may take place under the sun which can be known with certainty until it is actually accomplished. God reserves the causes of events in his own hand; and all that the highest wisdom can attain is such a degree of probability as may lay a foundation for distant and uncertain conjecture. He leads nations, as well as individuals, "by a way that they know not." The scenes are shifted and changed by an invisible hand, in such a manner as clearly to prove that the collective wisdom of mankind is no more competent to direct their way than the solitary wisdom of particular persons.

We have had a very striking instance of this, in the change that has recently taken place in the state of this nation;* which has, not by a slow gradation, but in the course of a very few weeks, and almost, as it were, instantaneously, fallen from the highest elevation to the lowest depression. From a state of unexampled prosperity, when we were exulting in the expectation of still brighter scenes, our prospect has become suddenly clouded with embarrassment, distress, and dismay. Who could anticipate that famine would thus rise out of the midst of plenty; want of subsistence, in the midst of the greatest abundance both of the natural productions of the earth and the artificial productions of human industry? Was there any one of the wise men of the world,—any one of those whose office it is to superintend the affairs of nations, and conduct them as far as finite minds can conduct them,—who formed the slightest conjecture of such a state of things? Did any of them foretel it? Had any one presented to his mind the faintest glimpse of the event which God in his providence has brought upon us? No: the destinies of nations are entirely in *his* hand, and "he doeth according to his will among the inhabitants of the earth, as well as in the army of heaven." He is pleased, indeed, to give us some glimpse into futurity by establishing a certain order in the dealings of his providence with rational creatures. While this enables us to use means which are adapted to produce certain effects, yet he so frequently frustrates the natural tendency of actions as to convince us that the course of events is under the control of a superior power. "The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor riches to men of understanding." Hence, while encouragement is given to the practice of virtue, by its general tendency to promote our temporal interest and advantage, confidence in our own wisdom and pru-

* This sermon was delivered in a season of great public calamity. A supposed failure in the crops produced the alarm of famine. The year 1826 was, throughout, extremely unfavourable to trade and manufactures. The number of bankrupts in the first six months had been nearly quadruple the number of the first six months of 1825. Labourers were so inadequately employed as to render them in great measure dependent on the contributions of the more affluent for the immediate necessaries of life. An unusual "panic" prevailed among commercial men; the *average* depreciation in the value of marketable commodities exceeded 18 per cent.; and all classes were struggling with extraordinary difficulties.—Ed.

dence, in neglect of a devout acknowledgment of the hand of God, appears to be the highest presumption. "The foolishness of God" appears, on many occasions, "wiser than men, and the weakness of God stronger than men." Individuals are sometimes defeated and ruined, even by the success of their own precautions; while, on the other hand, temerity and folly are sometimes permitted to accomplish what wisdom could not effect. Exceptions to the success of human effort are so numerous, and the variety of events on which that success depends so complicated, as continually to remind us of our absolute dependence on that unseen Hand which conducts us whithersoever he will, and accomplishes the whole purpose of his mind, without *giving an account of any of his matters.*

The most important events of human life, on which our happiness greatly depends, are, for the most part, concealed from our view. Very few persons have ascertained, with any degree of accuracy, either the degree or the kind of prosperity and success with which their efforts in pursuit of human felicity have been crowned. The greatest evils which we are called to endure generally take us by surprise, and the most favourable results have been so produced as to render it apparent that they were not entirely the fruit of our own sagacity, providence, or enterprise. There is no event so interesting to us as our departure from this world,—that great change, so comprehensive that it includes every other; yet this the Divine Being usually conceals. *Man also*, says the author of this book, *knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.** Very few persons die at the precise period which their own imaginations have allotted to that event. Death overtakes most "as a thief in the night." No man is enabled to ascertain at "what hour the Son of man cometh;" and while we are kept in perpetual uncertainty respecting this event, it is the greatest vanity to boast of our foreknowledge of any other, because, when this arrives, our interest in the present world ceases. All that is done under the sun, all the joys and sorrows, successes and disappointments, which take place among men, are then, in regard to us, events that occur in another world. It is true, indeed, that where the bulk of mankind, or great multitudes, are concerned, the calculation of chances respecting their average continuance on earth may be easy and exact: errors on one side are corrected and balanced by those on the opposite; the vibrations of the pendulum being equivalent to its remaining stationary. But to the *individual* the case is altogether different; all inferences in reference to the termination of individual life are vain. No person, therefore, can justify himself in deferring till to-morrow his preparation for that eternal world which may be the first thing that presents itself to his awaking faculties.

4. The Divine Being is pleased to conceal much in the economy of grace and redemption. In the manifestations of his will, even in

* Eccles. ix. 12.

that dispensation which is intended to afford some knowledge of himself, and of his gracious purposes and designs to the children of men, he maintains the same character, and mingles, in almost equal proportions, obscurity and brightness. Revelation, indeed, by its very nature, is intended to impart information. God has taught us in his Word, in the New Testament especially, many of the "deep things of God;" and we are under unspeakable obligations for that "*dayspring from on high which has visited us*, to guide our feet into the way of peace and give knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins." Yet the revelation contained in the Scriptures extends only to *facts*, not to the theory of those facts, or their original causes. The most important truths are communicated in a dogmatic, not a theoretic manner. We are taught, on the testimony of Him that cannot lie, insulated facts which we cannot connect with those reasons with which they are undoubtedly connected in the Divine mind. They rest solely on the basis of Divine authority; and we are left as much in the dark with respect to the mode of their existence as if they were not revealed. He has given us reason to expect that the Godhead subsists in three persons; distinct acts of personal agency being ascribed to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, while worship and adoration are claimed for all of them: but the theory of this fact is utterly beyond our comprehension; nor does it appear to be any part of the intention of Scripture to put us in possession of that theory. Those who have ventured to approach too near this inaccessible light, though with honest and sincere intentions, have for the most part, by attempting to explain it, involved the subject in deeper obscurity, and "darkened counsel by words without knowledge."

We are expressly informed that "the Word, who was in the beginning with God, and was God, was made flesh, and dwelt among men." There was a mysterious and inconceivable union between the divine nature of the Son of God, who was "the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person" before the world began, and the man Christ Jesus. But when we attempt to develop this mystery, and inquire how this union was effected and maintained without the two natures being identified, or their respective properties being confounded, we are utterly at a loss. We affirm nothing more than the matter of fact, we only put into other words the express testimony of the inspired writers, without pretending to unfold the mystery of his person, who was Immanuel, God with us. Surely, if we cannot discover how the Divine Being *made* man, it must be far beyond our faculties to comprehend how the Creator of the world *became* a partaker of the nature he had made. This, which has been styled the hypostatical union,—in consequence of which, the blood shed upon the cross, being the blood of God's own Son, possesses that marvellous efficacy by virtue of which it cleanses from all sin,—will probably for ever remain an impenetrable secret. *Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.* We are far from suppressing our conviction that this is a great mystery; we rejoice, on the contrary, in its incomprehensibility; we delight to lose ourselves in the impene-

trable shades which invest the subject, because in the darkness and cloud which envelop it God dwells. It is the greatness which forms the mystery of the fact,—the matchless love and condescension constitute the very nucleus of the difficulty. It could only be brought within the sphere of our comprehension by a contraction of its vast dimensions, by a depression of its native grandeur. A prostration of it to the level of our feeble capacities would only render it incapable of being the magnet of souls, the attraction of hearts, the wonder of the universe. The effect of this great fact on every one who has sufficient humility to believe the word of God is not at all diminished by its mysterious grandeur. On the contrary, the fact itself is replete with moral influence and practical effect. Could the whole theory of the incarnation be laid open to our view, no additional force would be given to those motives to fervent gratitude and devotedness to the service of our Redeemer which the mere fact is adapted to inspire. The practical influence is not at all impaired, but rather heightened, by the speculative difficulties which attend it, because they result merely from its ineffable grandeur. The same may be said with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity. The distinct parts assigned to the three divine persons exhibit the beautiful harmony of the plan of redemption: the Father sending his Son, the Son executing his Father's will, the Holy Spirit sanctifying the people of God by dwelling in their hearts. These truths are not less practical because of the mystery which attends the doctrine. We are as able to adore the grace of the Father, the love of the Son, the communion of the Holy Spirit,—to value the distinct agency of the several persons in the work of our salvation, as if we could perceive the theory of this unspeakable mystery.

With regard to the doctrine of the atonement, we are taught all that it is necessary for us to know; that the blood of Jesus Christ is the price of our redemption, and that it was infinitely worthy of God, "in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." We can perceive, in some degree, its tendency to advance and maintain the honour of God, as Moral Governor of the world. But many questions may be proposed, with respect to the extent of its efficacy, which our reason cannot penetrate. What connexion this great sacrifice may have with the happiness, what influence on the destiny, of beings of a higher order, of which the Scriptures give some faint intimation, we have no distinct and satisfactory knowledge; but this affords no objection to the testimony they contain, that "for us *men*, and for *our* salvation," the Son of God became incarnate, suffered, and died. It is worthy of the reserve of Infinite Majesty, to give us very brief hints with respect to the influence of these great facts on the innocent and holy part of the creation, to the utmost extent of his dominions.

Again: The operation of the Spirit of God in regeneration and sanctification we acknowledge to be highly mysterious: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof; but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born

of the Spirit." All Christians indeed know by experience the influence of the Spirit; but what is that mysterious principle styled grace—how it connects itself with the human mind—where its operations cease, and the operations of the human faculties begin—are questions which probably the wisest of men can no more unfold than the weakest and most ignorant: they are very far beyond the comprehension of the human understanding. But is it, on this account, less our duty to implore that sacred influence? If it be necessary, as the antidote of our depravity, "if that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit only is Spirit," and, consequently, "except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit"—of the Spirit operating as water, by cleansing and sanctifying the soul—"he cannot see the kingdom of God;" is his obligation to seek it less because he cannot explore this mystery? Is the folly of neglecting it more venial because he cannot penetrate the speculative depths of this doctrine? If any one feels by happy experience that power by which those who were "dead in trespasses and sins are quickened, raised up, and made to sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus;" if he feels that "all old things are passed away, and all things become new" within him; that he is braced by a new energy, animated by a new life, expatiates in the world to come as if it were his own; does he feel less gratitude for these mighty operations because he cannot detect and analyze the power by which they have been wrought, or explain the philosophy of divine influence?

These observations may be applied to all the other mysterious facts in Christianity, either past or future. The resurrection of the dead must be admitted to be a great mystery, which nothing but the occurrence of the fact can unfold. The apostle puts this question into the mouth of an infidel: "How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" which he answers in a very unceremonious manner: "Thou fool! that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body." The glorious prospect opened by this doctrine is not less animating because it surpasses our comprehension: on the contrary, its profundity only serves to increase our astonishment, and enhance our gratitude. The apostle, in his apology before Felix, resolves the whole into an immediate exertion of Divine power. "Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God *should raise the dead?*" If, indeed, the gospel professed to teach the theory of the fact, it would be a just objection that this was beyond the grasp of our faculties. If, on the contrary, it merely reveal *facts*, and those facts have immediate practical bearings on the hearts and lives of those who receive them, all objections on account of their mysteriousness are futile, because they proceed on the supposition that God intended to develop the whole mystery, whereas he discovers only so much as may be adapted to rectify the conscience and purify the heart.

II. I shall now attempt to show how the Divine Being promotes his glory, by such a temperature of light and shade as that which distinguishes all his discoveries of himself, and his dispensations towards his creatures.

1. The concealment which he has thrown in these various respects over his ways, works, and word tends to glorify him, as it is, in part, the necessary consequence of his infinite superiority to all finite beings in wisdom and understanding,—the inevitable result of his being God. His wisdom is that which belongs to him as the Fountain of wisdom, the Father of lights, the Source of all knowledge. His purposes and designs cannot, therefore, be adequately scanned by the wisdom of men, from whom he must necessarily conceal more than he reveals. A child cannot at once be made to comprehend the reasons of his father in imposing those restraints and privations which are a necessary part of parental discipline. It is only by degrees that his feeble capacity can be made to penetrate the secret of his education. If this be the case with respect to two finite minds, one of which has only arrived at greater maturity than the other, how much more disproportionate must be the plans of Infinite Wisdom to our narrow faculties! and what force does such a consideration give to that appeal of the apostle, "We have had fathers of our flesh that corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live!" Surely we owe as much deference to the wisdom, as much reliance on the kindness of the Eternal Parent, as we give to our earthly father! The infinite superiority of the Divine perfections renders this concealment necessary. He cannot, on account of his incomparable greatness and excellence, bring his plans and operations within the comprehension of his creatures. Viewing eternity in all its extent, having present to his mind all that is past and all that is future, seeing the end from the beginning, looking forward to the remotest period, and embracing in his prospect all possible future events, he regulates his conduct upon a scale which belongs only to him that inhabits eternity. Concealment is the necessary indication and proof, as well as the effect, of his being "infinite in council." The judgments of such a Being must, by the necessity of his nature, be, to our limited apprehensions, "a great deep." "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

2. The glory of God appears in concealing, because it evinces his entire independence on the wisdom, counsel, or co-operation of any or all of his creatures. It is his prerogative to be the only Being to whom it is always safe to conceal his designs and purposes. It is seldom safe for persons, in the highest stations, to conduct a complicated scheme of operations without taking advantage of counsel: "In the multitude of counsellors," says the wise man, "there is safety." No greater folly can be practised by so weak and frail a being as man, than, in matters of great moment, to decline taking the assistance of other minds. It is the privilege of very few, if any, mortals to possess at once that penetration and that comprehension of view which would

render it expedient for them to tread the most perilous paths alone. He that despises the counsel of others is, for the most part, sure to rue the effects of his folly. Nor is it necessary that the party consulted should possess superior capacity, or even knowledge of the subject in question. Different individuals see the same object in a different light, and a person of weaker intellect, not being immediately concerned, may be much more cool and impartial; some circumstance, therefore, which escaped the attention or the recollection of the most sagacious individual whose passions were excited, may occur to another person possessed of a very inferior degree of intellectual power Those who are the immediate agents in any plan of operation hav their feelings generally too much excited, are too eagerly engaged in the chase, to be capable of discerning all those possibilities of disappointment and frustration which may present themselves to the calm survey of indifferent spectators. But it is infinitely worthy of the Divine Being to give no account of any of his matters, with a view to obtain information from his creatures. "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity."* "Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."†

The Divine Being may, with infinite safety and propriety, retire within himself, into the secret recesses of his own essence, the depths of his own immensity, form his purposes apart, consult with none but himself. "He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it." The resources of his own nature are infinitely sufficient. Of whom should *he* ask light, who is himself the Father of lights? Why should *he* take advice of creatures, of whose wisdom all human knowledge is but a spark? There is not a portion of intelligence in the universe which is not already his own: to consult with his creatures would therefore be but to consult with himself. "There is, indeed, a spirit in man; but it is the inspiration of the Almighty which giveth him understanding." The counsels of God are his own counsels, unmixed with any communication of human wisdom. He cannot mingle his designs with any others, or take associate minds into his cabinet. He needs not to receive back, nor can he receive back, from his creatures any portion of the light which has been diffused from that ocean of wisdom and intelligence which eternally resides in himself.

3. The Divine glory is promoted by concealing, inasmuch as such

* Isaiah xl 13 15, 17 † Rom. xi. 34-36.

a degree of obscurity as attends the partial manifestation of the Divine will, and the progressive development of the Divine purposes, is eminently adapted to the state, exigency, and condition of man. Many important purposes are accomplished by this temperature between concealment and manifestation, as we have already in part shown, and proceed more clearly to exhibit in a few particulars.

(1.) The prophetic part of the Word of God, while it contains some general intimation of future events, is expressed in language, or denoted by imagery, proverbially obscure. This is intended to afford some general knowledge of the future, or it would not be prophecy; but, at the same time, obscurity forms a necessary ingredient. Were it free from that, were it like the language of narrative, it would give such a distinct knowledge of the future event as would lead some persons to use means for the purpose of accomplishing it by their own power, and tempt others presumptuously to endeavour to frustrate it. The design of prophecy is, not to enable persons to anticipate the minute circumstances of events, but partly to excite in their minds a general expectation, by presenting a vague and shadowy outline; partly to afford a striking illustration of the power and providence of God, in bringing to pass those events on the arrival of a distant age. The infinite wisdom of God appears in his foretelling future events, in such a manner that when they arrive they tally and correspond to the prophecy in a great variety of particulars; while in the mean time the events are so darkly shadowed, that the human agents by whom they are accomplished are ignorant that in so doing they are, in fact, fulfilling the counsels of Heaven. They merely follow the dictates of their own minds, act agreeably to their own inclinations, and have no intention of bringing to pass those events to which the prophecy has reference. Nebuchadnezzar little supposed that he was a mere rod in the hand of Deity, to chastise his own people. Cyrus, when he set out for Babylon to deliver them, little supposed that the hand of God had girded him, and prepared his way before him. Both were unconscious agents in accomplishing the purposes of that Divine Providence whose wisdom enlightened their path, and whose energy sustained them. God had foretold by his prophets the rejection of Jesus Christ by the Jewish nation, and his crucifixion; yet the Jews, in delivering him up, as well as Pilate and Herod in condemning and executing him, acted as freely, were therefore as much accountable, as if he had not been "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God delivered up."* The treason that was practised by Judas on his Lord and Master had been announced by the Psalmist David; yet how much is the wisdom of God magnified in permitting this to remain so secret, that the very perpetrator was probably ignorant of it, acting with the same freedom and spontaneity, with as close an adherence to the dictates of his own heart, the peculiarities of his own character, as if no such prophecy had been recorded. Thus God secures the glory of his own foreknowledge, at the same time that he

* Acts ii. 23.

leaves undisturbed the sphere of human agency. Were future events so distinctly predicted as to be clearly foreseen, this would either destroy the proof of Divine superintendence and agency, or would require such a perpetual miraculous control over the exercise of human faculties as would be inconsistent with the state and condition of accountable creatures in a world of probation. It is also necessary that prophecy should not operate as precept; for, with some, the will of God clearly foreseen would have the force of a command, and would be fulfilled as such; which would confound human agency with Divine. On the other hand, in consequence of this arrangement, none have it in their power to frustrate his designs: "He frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish."* In order, therefore, that the free agency of creatures may be preserved, the time and other circumstances of an event predicted are permitted to remain so uncertain that the persons who are to accomplish it continue ignorant of them till the event itself takes place.

Those great events which have materially affected the condition of the world were foretold by the ancient prophets. But did the human agents know they were fulfilling these predictions? Nothing was farther from their view: "they meant not so, neither did their heart think so;"† they were merely gratifying their own little passions, pursuing no other end than their own sinister and selfish policy. They were instruments in the hands of the Divine Being, as passive in accomplishing his purposes as the axe or hammer in the hands of a man. The predictions were mingled with much obscurity, as I have before remarked, to leave the free-agency of creatures undisturbed, and their accountability consequently unimpaired.

Prophecy is not intended to give men such a knowledge of futurity as to enable even the most sagacious to predict events. Those who have attempted with certainty to assign, beforehand, particular prophecies to particular events, have uniformly failed in their presumptuous endeavours. The design of prophecy is only to afford some general intimation, which may operate either as warning or encouragement. Its chief use is, after the event has taken place, to assure men of the universal providence of God, and convince them of that wisdom which foresees all future events, and that power which accomplishes them when the appointed period arrives. When, therefore, the Divine Being has been disposed to lift, in some degree, the veil which conceals futurity, he has only done it so far as to excite a general and indefinite expectation of the event, by exhibiting its general character and features, but by no means to disclose such circumstances of time, place, and instrumentality as might interfere in the least degree with the morality of human actions.

(2.) The Divine Being, by giving no account of the design of many dispensations of his providence, trains us to submission. He is the fit and proper object of trust to mankind. Trust in God is the grand

* Isaiah xliv 25 † Isaiah x. 7

principle of religion; it is another word, indeed, for faith, as that term is applied in the New Testament,—the grand principle which distinguishes good men from men of the world. The former trust in God; and, trusting in him, their souls are kept in peace. They commit their way to him, and resign their wills into his hands. God demands from his creatures universal confidence, not only explicit, but also implicit. The former is that which arises from a clear perception of his intentions and designs. When we are able to trace his counsels, our trust in him is regulated by our knowledge of his ways and purposes, and this must precede any exercise of the latter kind of trust. But when the Divine Being has, by such a manifestation of himself, by such a degree of illumination, established a conviction of his paternal character, and sufficiently revealed the principles of his government, it is worthy of his majesty to put his rational creatures to the test. Having had innumerable experimental proofs of his loving-kindness, and of those tender mercies which are over all his works, should we not be ready to follow him in a path that we cannot discern, even when his footsteps are in the great deep? May not the Father of the universe call on all his rational offspring to place unlimited confidence in himself, to be willing to fall into his hands, to commit all their concerns to his disposal, to abandon themselves to his pleasure? When we consider also the provision he has made for our eternal happiness in the economy of redemption, in those exceeding great and precious promises he has there revealed, and especially in the gift of his own Son, the sum and substance of all possible communications of good, how infinitely fit is it for such a creature, having to deal with such a God, to say, with the most entire self-oblivion, "Do with me as seemeth good in thy sight;" joy or sorrow, prosperity or adversity, are indifferent to me, since thou canst bring light out of darkness, order out of confusion, and cause these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, to work for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

(3.) Another advantage derived from this proceeding is, that it tends to promote humility and vigilance, at the same time that it excites to diligence and exertion. As we are to give account of our conduct, it is necessary that the Divine Being should afford us a rule of action, and this must be clear and determinate. But it is not necessary that we should be informed of the issue of actions; these, therefore, he is pleased to keep in his own hand. Yet, as without the hope of attaining some advantage, to stimulate us to activity, the mind would become lethargic, because we should feel ourselves chained down by a fatal destiny, in helpless despondency; such a constitution is wisely established, that success may be the general rule, failure the exception. But occasional instances of the latter are useful, by teaching us not to lean to our own understanding. Men are now too much disposed to "sacrifice to their own net, and burn incense to their own drag;" but if they were capable of certainly foreseeing the issue of their schemes,—if the battle were always to the strong, and riches to men of understanding,—how would the strong man glory in his strength,

.he rich man in his riches! These objects of pursuit would be the source of most intemperate idolatry, and would utterly corrupt the mind of their possessor, by leading him to glory in himself, and not in God. On the other hand, were there no connexion between the cultivation of certain qualities and success, did no advantage result from the possession of them, there would be no motive to action, no inducement to make those exertions which promote the improvement of mankind, and of the institutions of society. Still, the knowledge that a successful result cannot be calculated upon with certainty greatly tends to stamp vanity on all that relates to the present world, and thus leads men to trust in the living God, whose promises, resting on a certain basis, are secure of their final accomplishment.

With respect to the events that may befall us, especially in reference to that great and final event, death,—were the period perfectly certain, we should be tempted, during the interval, to sit down in the indulgence of security. Such knowledge would induce, in most men, the greatest rashness and presumption. While the event was at a distance they would gratify their appetites without restraint; they would, upon system, procrastinate attention to their eternal interests. Whereas, now, the uncertainty of its arrival furnishes the highest reason for being always ready, and renders the neglect of preparation the greatest folly and infatuation. It should operate as a solemn admonition from God to perpetual watchfulness and care, not to leave that undone which, if undone at a dying hour, renders the doing of all other things merely vanity and vexation of spirit, while we are left in a state of inconsolable wretchedness. All pretence for delay being hereby cut off, the inattention of the majority of mankind to these divine warnings becomes utterly inexcusable; especially if we consider the magnitude of the event itself, and that the change it effects in our condition is not only awfully great, but will continue, beyond any possibility of future change, to eternity. Hence our Saviour urges this circumstance as one of the most powerful motives to incessant vigilance. "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh. If the good man of the house had known at what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through." "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt, your lamps burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for the coming of their Lord. Who is that wise and faithful servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing?" God is pleased to deal with us, in the economy of his providence and grace, as creatures that possess reason, and are therefore accountable,—that can look forward, and make provision for the exigencies of the future,—and whose great business it is to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling." The great necessity which attaches to us is that of changing worlds; while our life is but a fleeting vapour, liable to be instantly extinguished. That event is perpetually suspended over us, as the inevitable circumstance attending our destiny; but we are in total ignorance of the time of its arrival. We cannot, therefore, without the greatest presumption, call a single moment our own. How is

this arrangement adapted to fix and concentrate our attention on the momentous event; to cause it to combine itself with all our plans and counsels! If we are wise, we shall constantly remember our latter end, be always ready, and not suffer that day to come upon us like a thief. "Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments."

There is another, less solemn, yet important view which may be taken of this point, and equally illustrates the wisdom of God in concealing future events. Were the time of our death foreseen, what a melancholy character would it impart to the pursuits and occupations of the human race! If every man saw the moment of his death continually before him, how would his thoughts be fixed to the fatal spot; and, as it approached nearer, the consideration of it would probably absorb every other. With respect to our fellow-creatures, how would it poison the springs of enjoyment, were parents and children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, able to calculate with certainty the period of each other's lives! We should seem to be walking among the victims of death; the scenes of human existence would lose all cheerfulness, animation, and beauty. The interests of society would also sustain most serious injury. Many great and noble enterprises would never have been begun, could the persons who, in the hope of life, engaged in them, have foreseen that before they could be concluded they themselves would be snatched away by the hand of death. Many discoveries, by which great benefit has been conferred on the world, would not have been elicited. Few efforts probably would be made to attain any object, the consequences of which terminate with the life of the party, if he foresaw that they would be intercepted by death. Who would build, or engage in any lucrative employment, if he certainly knew that the benefit would not be even partially realized during the term of his mortal existence? But, happily for mankind, events are concealed—duties only are made known. With respect also to calamities which stop short of death, how wisely is it ordered, that, in consequence of their coming upon us by surprise, the courage and fortitude required to encounter them are not weakened by a presentiment of dread! The prospect of them perpetually before our eyes would throw a cloud over the whole path of life, and when they arrived would cause them to fall upon us with supernumerary and redoubled weight. On the other hand, could we foresee our successes, they would lose much of their flavour and relish. The surprise with which they often come upon us is one element of our enjoyment of them.

The future world also has been placed, by the wisdom of God, just in that light in which it is most for our benefit that it should be placed. Were we fixed in the situation of the apostle John, were the heavenly state continually laid open to our view, religion would be no longer a voluntary service; we should be forced to attend to objects so transcendently glorious brought thus near to us. Could we distinctly hear the voices, like mighty thunderings, heard within the vail, they would render us deaf to every earthly sound: religion would be no longer matter of choice; and consequently faith would be no longer matter of

virtue. The preference of present to future interests, and therefore the exercise of self-denial, would be impossible. But the Divine Being has been pleased to throw over the heavenly world a great degree of obscurity. Jesus Christ has indeed brought life and immortality to light by the gospel; has raised our hopes to the highest point, by investing the future state of glory with unspeakable elevation and grandeur; but has not explicitly taught us in what that state will consist: "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." We know enough of futurity to make it become the great object of our attention; although it does not so press upon our organs as to render us insensible to present scenes and interests.

4. The glory of God is concerned in concealing much in his character, works, providence, and revelation, because this will probably be a source of great additional happiness to the redeemed, and mingle itself among the elements of devotional enjoyment in the eternal state. A degree of surprise and astonishment, which cannot consist with the perfect comprehension of whatever falls under our cognizance, appears to be one ingredient in the highest degree of felicity of which a rational being is susceptible. There is a principle in the constitution of our nature which renders us dissatisfied with what we thoroughly understand in all its parts: when there is nothing more to be discovered, from that moment it begins to pall upon us, and we must pass to something which will give scope to the activities of the human mind.

The Deity is intended to be the everlasting field of the human intellect, as well as the everlasting object of the human heart, the everlasting portion of all holy and happy minds, who are destined to spend a blissful but ever-active eternity in the contemplation of his glory. This can only be effected by his concealing himself. He will for ever remain "the unknown God." We shall ever be conscious that we know little compared with what remains to be known of him; that our most rapturous and lofty songs fall infinitely short of his excellence. If we stretch our powers to the uttermost, we shall never exhaust his praise, never render him adequate honour, never discharge the full amount of claim which he possesses upon our veneration, obedience, and gratitude. When we have loved him with the greatest fervour, our love will still be cold compared with his title to our devoted attachment. This will render him the continual source of fresh delight to all eternity. His perfection will be an abyss never to be fathomed; there will be depths in his excellence which we shall never be able to penetrate. We shall delight in losing ourselves in his infinity. An unbounded prospect will be extended before us; looking forward through the vista of interminable ages, we shall find a blissful occupation for our faculties, which can never end; while those faculties will retain their vigour unimpaired, flourish in the bloom of perpetual youth; ..... and the full consciousness remain that the Being whom we contemplate can never be found out to perfection ..... that he may always add to the impression of what we know, by throwing a veil of indefinite obscurity over his character. The shades in which he will for ever conceal himself will have the same tendency to excite our adoring

wonder as the effulgence of his glory; the depths in which he wih retire from our view, the recesses of his wisdom and power, as the open paths of his manifestation. Were we capable of comprehending the Deity, devotion would not be the sublimest employment to which we can attain. In the contemplation of such a Being we are in no danger of going beyond our subject; we are conversing with an infinite object ..... in the depths of whose essence and purposes we are for ever lost. This will probably give all the emotions of freshness and astonishment to the raptures of beatific vision, and add a delightful zest to the devotions of eternity. This will enable the Divine Being to pour in continually fresh accessions of light; to unfold new views of his character, disclose new parts of his perfection, open new mansions in himself, in which the mind will have ample room to expatiate. Thus shall we learn, to eternity, that, so far from exhausting his infinite fulness, there still remain infinite recesses in his nature unexplored—scenes in his counsels never brought before the view of his creatures; that we know but "parts of his ways;" and that instead of exhausting our theme, we are not even approaching nearer to the comprehension of the Eternal All. It is the mysteriousness of God, the inscrutability of his essence, the shade in which he is invested, that will excite those peculiar emotions which nothing but transcendent perfection and unspeakable grandeur can inspire.

Before I conclude this discourse, permit me to remind you, that while there are many things which God conceals, and thereby advances his glory, he has made manifest whatever is essential for man to know. Whatever is intimately connected with our duty is most plainly taught; whatever is important to our welfare and happiness is fully revealed. Do not for a moment imagine that he has concealed any thing that bears a near relation to your interest. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good." He has distinctly set before you the good and evil of a future life. It is true, you know not the time of your death, but you know that you are mortal; you know not the particulars of what will succeed death, but you know that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and also of the unjust; that they who have done good shall come forth to the resurrection of life, they that have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation. Jesus Christ has disclosed in the gospel, as far as they are important for any practical purposes, the realities of eternity; has announced to you his second appearance to raise the dead, and decide the eternal destinies of the human race; to separate between the righteous and the wicked, place every individual of mankind in one of those classes, and divide them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. He has told you that he will say to the former, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire;" and to the latter, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." He has assured you, that those who die in a state of impenitence, unbelief, and alienation from God will sink into eternal misery; that their doom shall be to go away into everlasting punishment, the portion of the devil and his angels. Those, on the contrary,

who are righteous, who are penitent believers, shall be raised in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and then caught up to meet the Lord in the air; afterward be assessors with him in the judgment; and, at the end of that solemn process, shall enter with him through the gates into the city, and be for ever with the Lord. You are assured, that immediately after the event of your death has taken place, there will remain no possibility of a change in your condition—that you will take possession of all the horrors of hell, or all the glories of heaven, the moment that the vapour of your life is extinguished in the element of death. He has told you, that you must have to do with Christ, either in the exercise of faith and trust here, or of astonishment and surprise when you shall lift up your eyes and see, in the person of a neglected Saviour, your offended Sovereign and righteous Judge! "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him; they also that pierced him shall wail because of him." "Before him shall be gathered all nations." They who have not received his gospel, submitted to his sceptre, cast themselves into the arms of his grace . . . . . shall be banished for ever from his presence. The divine glory is intrusted to him; the destinies of the world are committed to his hands. You have no other resource but to "kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." He has not only disclosed to you the fact, but also many of the circumstances and appendages of that solemn assize, in which the eternal destinies of all mankind will be determined; that a great white throne will be spread, and from the face of him that sitteth upon it the heavens and the earth will flee away; that the books shall be opened, and all men judged out of the things written in those books, "according to their works;"* that the secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest; and an eternity of happiness or misery dealt out to every one by his mighty hand, according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or evil; that the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burned up; that the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat; that for the abode of the righteous there shall be new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; that in the bottomless abyss prepared for apostate angels all the wicked shall be for ever confined.

These are subjects on which the wisdom of man can say nothing, or can utter but the feeble articulations of infancy . . . . . The highest efforts of human sagacity reach not beyond the bounds of time; they cannot pass the threshold of eternity. They are scanty and inadequate, and leave the world in darkness and misery, compared with these discoveries of revelation. Do not conclude, from the partial obscurity which attends some of its truths, that religion is not the great concern of accountable immortal creatures, or that you will be justified in disregarding such affecting prospects as these.

* Rev. xx. 11-13.

No, my brethren, this obscurity is not such as to hide from you your great interest, to make a right choice doubtful, or render it matter of the least hesitation whether you should serve God or not. God has revealed enough, where the light of the gospel comes, to give men the clearest information concerning their eternal welfare; has set before them life, and has set before them death; has pointed out the broad and the narrow way; shown them the path of destruction, that they may avoid it—and the way of life, that they may walk in it. Jesus Christ has come to render these things so plain and obvious, that even "wayfaring men, though fools, may not err therein." Though, with respect to the constitution of his person, mysterious as his Divine Father, being "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person;" with respect to the practical purpose of his incarnation, the great design of his appearance in human flesh, he is "the Light of the world; whoso followeth him shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."* "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."† If you are earnest in seeking the salvation of your souls, you have all the evidence you can wish; you are distinctly informed, that a remedy has been provided, exactly suited to your case. Though you are guilty, the blood of Christ can expiate that guilt; though you are polluted, the Spirit of Christ can cleanse from that pollution. The gospel is every way adapted to your wants and misery. It has pleased the Father that in Christ all fulness should dwell. You are invited to come to him at this moment, to receive out of that fulness all spiritual blessings—pardon, sanctification, and life everlasting. He has given you, in reference to these, "line upon line, precept upon precept." Jesus Christ has become the incarnate wisdom of God. No person now need perish for want of a profound understanding, since the method of salvation has been brought down to the level of the meanest capacity: "Wisdom stands at the corners of the streets, and cries, To you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." Surely these are the deep things of God, which the Spirit who searcheth all things alone has explored; which the wisdom of the world never knew, the tongue of human eloquence never proclaimed, the discoveries of human philosophy never approached: but now they form the very elements of piety, so that the meanest person cannot neglect them without living in a practical defiance of God, and contempt of his authority. He has thrown an air of obscurity over a thousand other things, but not over the things that make for your peace. You are not left in any uncertainty as to the basis of hope towards God. He has clearly taught you what you must do to be saved; how you may draw nigh to God, even to his seat; and through what medium you may pour out your hearts before him. "Behold," he says, "I lay in Zion a foundation-stone. Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ. If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins. Him that

* John viii. 12 † John xiv. 6.

cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out." You know what is that path which will bring you to eternal blessedness . . . . . that with shame and confusion of face, on account of your past transgressions, you "flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you;" that he may "of God be made unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." This is a plain path, open to all. "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God;" but these are "things revealed, that belong unto us and to our children for ever."

Among the things fully revealed is the placability of God, his readiness to receive the chief of sinners who repent of their sins and believe the gospel. He stands with open arms to receive returning prodigals. Though he condescends not to reveal the secrets of his wisdom, counsel, and government, he has opened the secrets of his heart, displayed the riches of his compassion and grace. He says, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." This is your wisdom; this is your happiness; this is the only way to everlasting life. Let us all apply our hearts and consciences to the plain undeniable declarations of revelation. There will be no excuse for any one who lives a sinful, careless, and worldly life, and refuses to enter into covenant with God by the sacrifice of his Redeemer, and to serve him, on account of the obscurity of the doctrine of salvation. That obscurity is not of such a nature as to darken its evidence, or render in the least degree doubtful any thing that relates to the duties and prospects of accountable immortal creatures. There is no knowledge of any value to you in comparison of this—the knowledge of Christ, and him crucified. You are called upon, by believing in him, to unite yourselves to his promises, and cleave to his unsearchable riches. Have you done this? have you believed in this Saviour, who is the Light of the world? Are you walking in the light; or treasuring up materials of accumulated condemnation, by saying to God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways,"—though he approaches you, not in the character of a judge, but as the Father of mercies and the God of all grace, giving his "only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life?" Let not this be "your condemnation, that light is come into the world, but that you loved darkness rather than light, because your deeds are evil." But "walk in the light while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you." Submit to Jesus Christ; be guided by his holy truths and precepts; and you will attain that happiness which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man"

## III.

## ON THE DUTY, HAPPINESS, AND HONOUR OF MAINTAINING THE COURSE PRESCRIBED TO US BY PROVIDENCE.

ACTS xiii. 25.—*As John fulfilled his course.**

[PREACHED AT THE CHAPEL, MAZE POND, SOUTHWARK, MAY 26, 1811.]

THE life of every individual may be compared to a river: rising in obscurity, increasing by the accession of tributary streams, and, after flowing through a longer or shorter distance, losing itself in some common receptacle. The lives of individuals also, like the course of rivers, may be more or less extensive, but will all vanish and disappear in the gulf of eternity. While a stream is confined within its banks, it fertilizes, enriches, and improves the country through which it passes; but if it deserts its channel it becomes injurious and destructive, a sort of public nuisance, and, by stagnating in lakes and marshes, its exhalations diffuse pestilence and disease around. Some glide away in obscurity and insignificance; while others become celebrated, traverse continents, give names to countries, and assign the boundaries of empires. Some are tranquil and gentle in their course; while others, rushing in torrents, dashing over precipices, and tumbling in waterfalls, become objects of terror and dismay. But, however diversified their character or their direction, all agree in having their course short, limited, and determined; soon they fall into one capacious receptacle; their waters eventually mix in the waves of the ocean. Thus human characters, however various, have one common destiny; their course of action may be greatly diversified, but they all lose themselves in the ocean of eternity.

Few have appeared on the stage of action whose life was more important than that of the great prophet mentioned in my text. His course was a very extraordinary one, distinguished in some sense above all others, our blessed Lord himself only and always excepted. John was called to a very singular work; his ministry formed an epoch in the history of the church. It was the connecting link between the two dispensations. He first preached the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God was preached, and every man pressed into it."

The most extraordinary events began with the baptism of John, and continued until Christ was taken up into heaven. His peculiar office was to announce the Saviour of the world as then present in it: other

* Printed from the notes of W. B Gurney, Esq.

prophets had spoken of him as *to come;* "*but there standeth,*" says John, "*among you one whose shoe-latchet I am not worthy to unloose.*" He was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord;" and while he was actually engaged in his commission, he was able to declare, "*Behold, he standeth among you.*" His commission was high: to reclaim an apostate people; "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just;" "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." His career, too, was extraordinary, and his character and course marked and different from all others. Much of the wisdom of Providence appears in fitting the instrument to the work. The work appointed to John was to reclaim a nation from its departure from God, to rouse a people sunk in insensibility and impenitence, to preach repentance, to proclaim the approach of the kingdom of heaven, to usher in a higher economy, a new dispensation; and for all this he was admirably qualified. He was endued with the spirit and power of Elias. His spirit was undaunted and unyielding; he rebuked the pride of kings. He was indifferent and insensible alike to the charms of pleasure, the allurements of pomp, the smiles of power, and the frowns of greatness. His whole soul was concentrated in his object; he was superior to the world,—its forms and fashions made no impression on his mind, and left no traces. He was austere in his manner, abstemious in his food, rustic in his apparel: he partook of the wildness of the wilderness in which he first made his appearance. "He had his raiment of camels' hair, a leathern girdle was about his loins, and his meat was locusts and wild honey." These are lively images of his work. "Then went out unto him Jerusalem and all Judea, and the region round about Jordan; and were baptized of him, confessing their sins."

His ministry finished the legal, and brought in the evangelical dispensation. His voice was like the strong wind that bloweth—the whirlwind that maketh the earth to quake—the loud blast of that trumpet which was to wake the nations—the earthquake and the whirlwind which immediately preceded "the still small voice." His career was brilliant, and his success extraordinary. A large portion of the Jews became his converts, at least for a time: even the scribes and Pharisees listened to him. "He was a burning and a shining light:" the apostles themselves were many of them first his disciples, and received from him those instructions which prepared them for the coming of the Messiah. By the authentic historian Josephus he is spoken of in terms of the highest encomium. It is remarkable, above all, that he was the only prophet born of woman who was himself the subject of prophecy.

As his course was short, so was his end violent and tragical. He fell a martyr to his fidelity, and the artifices of an intriguing woman. Having rebuked Herod on account of his incestuous intercourse with his brother's wife, he was sacrificed to her resentment. He disappeared soon: his course was hurried and impetuous; eager, as it were, to reach his destination, and to mingle his grand soul with its kindred elements in eternity. He was raised up for a particular service; and

when that was accomplished he was removed. He was not *the* light, but the harbinger of that light, the morning star that was to usher in the Sun of Righteousness. "He bore witness of the light, but he was not that light;" and no sooner did that light appear than he was withdrawn, that nothing might divide the great homage due to the Saviour, according to his own prediction—"He must increase, but I must decrease."

Having, perhaps, already detained you too long in contemplating the character and conduct of John the Baptist, I shall occupy what remains of our time in illustrating and inculcating two or three practical observations, founded on the words of the text.

I. That there is a prescribed course or sphere of action, appointed to every individual by the Author of our nature.

We are not a race of independent creatures abandoned to live without control; we are not sent into the world to follow the dictates of our own will. We cannot commit a greater mistake than to suppose that we are in any sense *our own;* we belong to another: even our limbs and faculties do not so much belong to ourselves as we do to our Maker. To do his will, to conform to his pleasure, to keep his commandments, to fulfil his designs, to serve the end of his government, and to promote his glory,—these are the great ends of our existence; and to attain them ought to be the fundamental law of our being: otherwise we live in vain, worse than in vain; and it would have been better for us never to have had an existence.

There is one great principle of a holy life which is one and the same in all who live as they ought; and that is, conforming ourselves to the will of God, complying with his plan, doing every thing to please and glorify him. Thus our Saviour himself when in this world was devoted to his Father's will; this was his object constantly, even when observed by those around him. It cannot be better exemplified than in that beautiful saying of his, when he was requested to take refreshment at the well of Jacob—"I have meat to eat that the world knoweth not of; my meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish his work:" and it is doing the will of God from the heart, which implies a careful attention to all the manifestations of it, and a reverential regard to all the discoveries of it, with a fixed and determined resolution to comply with it whenever and wherever it is known. This, as I said, is the end of our existence, the business of our life; and we live to no purpose, or to a bad one, but as we conform to it. But, although this is the universal principle by which all are to be actuated and guided, yet it admits of great and numerous variations in its practical application. The principle is the same; but when it comes to be acted upon by individuals, and imbodied in the experience and conduct of men in the several conditions of life, it gives birth to an endless diversity. To do the will of God, and to promote his glory, is the proper object and end of all: but the manner in which an apostle, for instance, was called upon to do this, is not that in which an ordinary teacher is to do it; nor the manner of an ordinary teacher that of a private Christian. The duties of a sovereign are extremely different

from those of his ministers and officers of state; and those, again, from the duties of inferior magistrates; and of magistrates, from those of private subjects. Of the rich it is required to do good and to communicate, to sustain the cause of God and truth in the world, to support public institutions of a charitable and beneficial nature, and freely to distribute of their abundance to the necessities of their fellow-creatures; of the poor, to be prudent, diligent, careful; and so on.

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Thus the several conditions and relations of individuals have their respective duties, in which they are to do the will of God, in "*fulfilling their course;*" but in each and all, the same care and attention ought to be maintained to the one grand principle of which we have been speaking: one spirit should animate the whole; one great end, under whatever variety of form and mode.

In the principles of human nature, and in the powers and faculties of our bodies and senses, there is a general agreement: yet no two individuals of the human race are alike; and the same variety exists in moral arrangements. In the elements which compose the principle of holiness, the essential ingredients are the same; but when they come to be applied and imbodied in a right course of action, they often seem widely different. Although the end is the same in all, yet the manner in which this end is viewed will be various: the rays of light when blended in day are simple and of a uniform colour; but when they are refracted through a prism they exhibit all the colours of the rainbow. Such, my brethren, are the principles of holiness, and their diversified action in individuals: but, I repeat it, it is doing the will of God in all; this, this is the object, the grand vital principle, that animates good men in all ages, in all circumstances, of all classes and denominations. This is the true catholic spirit, which unites all the members of the true church; and in proportion as men live well, and live for eternity, this is the ruling and governing principle,—to glorify God.

II. We observe that there is a set and limited time allotted to that sphere and course of action: "There is an appointed time to man upon earth." The course of man is not indeterminate, but has its limits, and they are narrow: "Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time." If we had not the testimony of Scripture on this point, it would be reasonable to conclude, from our observation of nature and the world around us, that the termination of human life is not left in uncertainty, but that it is directed by the wisdom of Him who himself is the Author of existence. If "a sparrow falleth not to the ground without his knowledge," much less can the death of a human creature take place without his interposition. Whether we fall premature victims to disease, or perish by what men call accident, or sink under the burdens of age, still it is according to the will of God, "whose counsels shall stand, and who will do all his pleasure."

This course is not only limited, but it is short. It is but a little time that we spend on earth: "Behold," says the Psalmist, "thou hast

made my days as an handbreadth, and my years are as nothing before thee." Whether we drop in infancy from the cradle to the grave, or are cut off in youth; whether we attain to manhood, or even to old age; still we soon arrive at the boundary, we soon reach the end of our course, and often without passing through its intermediate stages. "Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee!"

The stream of human existence is rapid and impetuous; its waves follow each other in quick succession, and many are ingulfed almost as soon as they appear. Early in infancy the stream glides away like a summer brook, and leaves the fond parent mournfully to recall the pleasure he received in contemplating its unsullied purity and its play ful meanders. Of those who set out with us in this journey of life, how many have disappeared from our side! what changes have taken place in the circle of our connexions since we began our course! how few can we now number of those with whom, in the earlier period of our lives, "we took sweet counsel!" Every year makes great changes. How great are the changes, my brethren, which have been made in the face of *this* congregation! Where are many of our friends in whom we delighted? They have finished their course; they have passed through the gate that opens into the invisible world; they have completed their probation, and appeared at the tribunal of Infinite Majesty; they have done with the converse of mortals, and have seen and heard things which it is impossible to utter; they have for ever finished their course.

III. Our happiness and our honour consist entirely in completing the course which God has assigned to us. In filling up the sphere of action which he has prescribed, and which his providence has marked out to us, there are two great mistakes into which we are liable to fall, in our views of this subject.

1. That there is some other happiness and honour than that which is to be found in fulfilling our course, or, in other words, occupying that sphere of duty which God hath been pleased to assign us. Some are looking for their satisfaction to the pleasures of sin; others to the gratification which the world affords; some attach their notion of happiness to some external situation not yet found, and imagine it is to be met with there. Settle it in your minds, my dear friends, that the only happiness worth seeking,—that which will live in all circumstances, and abide the vicissitudes of life,—our only real and proper good,—consists in *fulfilling our course*, conforming to the Divine will, imitating the Divine perfections, obeying God's commands, walking in the light of his countenance, and being at peace with him. The prescription of this as the way to happiness is among the fixed laws of our nature: it is "founded among the floods, deeper than the foundations of the everlasting mountains." It forms a part of the constitution of heaven itself. It was among the original decrees promulgated by God in the silence of the universe. Eternal truth has declared, that "the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding." Could you ask the children of men,

one by one, at the verge of life,—and especially those who have passed into eternity,—from the very commencement of time, whether they have been happy, and what constituted their happiness, there is not one who would not confess that the fear of the Lord was the only wisdom, and the knowledge of the Most High the supreme good.

If you could find another species of happiness, it would be what the wisdom of man has not yet discovered. You must look into some corner of the world which the eye of Omniscience has not penetrated; you must defy Omnipotence, and give the lie to eternal truth. "Where," says the Almighty, "is the place of wisdom?" All creatures testify that it is not in them. But God declares, "The fear of the Lord, *that* is wisdom."

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Accursed be that impiety, shut out from the universe be the shadow of that conception, which would represent happiness to be found in the depths, the heights, the breadths, or in any thing separate from the service, the knowledge, and the love of the Eternal Being. This, "this is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." This fountain of water flows for the refreshment of the meanest peasant, as well as of the greatest monarch; this is a universal school of wisdom, into which all are invited. You may be happy, but there is but one way, and that is, "fulfilling your course," consulting the will of God, commending yourself to the guidance of his wisdom in a life of religion, living not to yourselves but unto God, seeking satisfaction in the mortification of every inclination which crosses his everlasting purposes; you may even lose your life for his sake, and you will find it.

2. The second mistake against which we should guard you is that of supposing we should be able to conform ourselves to the will of God, and to our own sphere of action, better in some other state; and being therefore dissatisfied with that precise state in which his providence has placed us. The wisdom of each consists in fulfilling his *own* course. The course of John the Baptist was difficult, obstructed with afflictions, and beset with dangers; but he fulfilled it. How many objections might he have formed against the precise course assigned him! how many reasons might he have advanced for supposing that in some other sphere he might have glorified God more entirely! But he yielded himself to the wisdom of God.

Some are ready to suppose that they should more easily comply with the dictates of religion, and more easily surmount temptations, in a condition different from their own; that they should have acted better in another combination of circumstances; and thus venture, if I may so speak, to lay the blame of their defection and misconduct upon God, who has fixed the bounds of their habitation.

The poor may easily imagine, how amiably and liberally they should have acted if their lot had been cast among the rich; and the rich, on the other hand, how safely they should have been preserved from a variety of snares, if they had been screened by the privacy of the

poor. The young will ascribe their errors to the impetuosity so natural to their age; those who are more advanced are ready to imagine that if they enjoyed more leisure, and were not so entangled with the cares and perplexities of their active station, they should be better able to attend to the concerns of a future life. The aged are wishing for the energy and capacity of attention which belong to youth: their time, they plead, is passed; it is too late for them to change.

But all these are great mistakes. Our true happiness is to be found in fulfilling our present course, conforming ourselves to the duties of that station in which we are placed, in consulting the will of God under the circumstances in which we actually are, and improving the opportunity which our condition affords. If we do not *now* love and fear the Supreme Being,—if we cannot *now* resist temptation, mortify corruption, and devote ourselves to the service of God,—if we *now* feel no resolution "to run the race that is set before us,"—we may be assured that a change of circumstances will not avail. It is not a change of state that we want, but a change of heart: the disease is within, in the state of our minds, the bent of our dispositions, which will follow us into another situation, produce the same effects, and place us at the same distance from happiness. What you want, my brethren, and what we all want, is the renovating principle of Divine grace, that sanctifying principle within us; to have the law of God written in our hearts, without which no other change will avail. The grace of God in the heart will preserve us in any and every situation, and in all circumstances will be fruitful of advantage to our souls: it will guide us and keep us humble in prosperity, cheer us in adversity, and render its discipline salutary; it will sustain and direct us in life, support us in death, and go with us into eternity. It was this that enabled Joseph to preserve his chastity in the midst of temptation; that supported Daniel in the very jaws of lions; and inspired the confidence of Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego in "the flaming fiery furnace." This is the principle which brings God to our view in seasons of the greatest trial, by piercing the cloud of flesh, and enabling us to see him that is invisible to the eyes of sense. The man who possesses this principle will adorn an elevated condition with humility; and a condition of obscurity and poverty with integrity and resignation.

If, therefore, there be any persons in this assembly that feel a conviction of the importance of a religious life, and a course of right actions, but yet are sensible of a moral inability, let them have recourse to the fountain of Divine grace. Come to Him who is eyes to the blind, ears to the deaf, feet to the lame. Cast yourselves at the feet of the Saviour; be conscious of your weakness, misery, and guilt. Pray to Him who is the fountain of all light, that the beams of his grace may be communicated to you; that his light may shine into your hearts, to give unto you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.

This will govern the heart as well as guide the understanding

direct the will, and regulate the affections: this will make you holy; this will subdue temptation; this will be an antidote against the infection of evil examples. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith; for who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?" This will surmount the disorders of life, the fear of death, and conduct the soul to everlasting felicity.

Finally, my brethren, let each of us attach himself with more seriousness, alacrity, and fervour than ever, to the proper duties of his station; let each consider in what instances he fails to fulfil his course; let each examine himself, and see wherein he fails to observe "the good and perfect law of God." Let him discover "his easily besetting sin," and see how far this has perverted his course, and turned his affections from God.

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The time is coming when you will perceive that there is no true wisdom to be found but in doing the will of God. The value of *time* is to be estimated by the opportunity which it gives us of laying up riches for *eternity*. He is the most steady pursuer of his own interest who has "laid up treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

Some of you, perhaps, have not even begun: you have done nothing yet for the glory of God; you have been living entirely to yourselves; and your lives, it may be, are approaching to a close. Begin then to be wise; reflect on what you have heard; and remember, it will be ratified by the impressions of a dying hour.

There are some present, perhaps, who are near to the end of their course, and have the satisfaction to reflect that they have had their conversation with God. Happy such persons, whatever their station in life may be! Let the consideration of your having so nearly fulfilled your course make you more diligent and circumspect in what remains of it. In a very short time your conflict will be over, your corruptions will be slain. So near to victory, do not let the weapons of warfare fall out of your hands: "Be faithful unto death, and you shall receive a crown of life."

The memory of John the Baptist is perpetuated with honour, because he "fulfilled his course;" while that of Herod and Pontius Pilate are covered with infamy. Which of these characters will you imitate? Will you be among those whom God condescends to honour, to whom he will say, "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord?" or will you now surround yourselves with a few sparks of worldly pleasure, and lie down in eternal darkness?

Whenever the gospel is preached, this alternative is set before you; the alternative of "shining like the sun for ever; or of awaking to shame and everlasting contempt." If there were no judgment-seat at which we must appear, we might have our election between peace of conscience and the gratification of our desires. But our course here is a preparation for our course hereafter. Never dissever in your

minds a life of piety and a life of honour; there is no glory, no happiness, but in the love and service of God.

Hear the language of the apostle Paul, in the near prospect of a violent death: "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

Do you believe this? If you do not, you are not Christians; you wear a mask. But if you do, the conviction and confession of this truth will for ever be a source of torment to you, unless you now imitate the conduct of this apostle, give yourselves up to God, and embrace and pursue a holy and religious life in Christ Jesus.

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## IV.

## CHRIST'S PRE-EXISTENCE, CONDESCENSION, AND EXALTATION.

PHIL. ii. 5–9.—*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him.**

[PREACHED AT THE CHAPEL IN DEAN-STREET, SOUTHWARK, JUNE 27, 1813.]

IN this chapter it is manifest from the context that the apostle is inculcating upon professors of the gospel a spirit of condescension and humility. "Let nothing," saith he, "be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than himself: look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

His intention is to enforce a disposition that enters very deeply into the lowly spirit of the gospel, an attention to the circumstances of others, a preference of their interests to our own, and a willingness to condescend to make great sacrifices of our own interest and gratification, of our own honour and advantage, to promote their good. It is that particular species of Christian virtue and benevolence which stands opposed to the tenacious maintenance of outward distinctions and dignities that insists on all the honour and pre-eminence which we might be supposed to have a right to claim; and lays by its own advantage and honour for the sake of promoting the spiritual and tem-

* From the notes of W. B. Gurney, Esq., corrected, in a few cases, by comparison with the notes sent by six other friends. See Mr. Hall's own sketch of the argument, p. 24–28.—ED.

poral interests of our fellow-creatures, and especially of our fellow-christians.

Of this disposition he presents a striking example in the noble conduct of our Saviour, and in the great doctrines which are exhibited in his incarnation and converse in this world, as well as in the wonderful example of love and humility which he showed in becoming "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" and he shows that by such a conduct as this it was that Jesus Christ rose in our nature to that inexpressible majesty with which he is at present invested. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Permit me to request your attention while I endeavour to set forth, in some imperfect measure, that example of great condescension and humility which is exhibited in the passage before us.

Now, in the idea of condescension, we must suppose a superior and an inferior,—one by whom that virtue is exercised, and another to whom it is shown. Where there is a perfect equality there is no room for the exercise of this particular species of virtue; much less where a superior only is in question: for, though we may behave ourselves with the utmost propriety towards an equal or a superior, yet it is impossible that he should be the object of our condescension; this would involve a very great absurdity in language.

Whenever we speak of this species of excellence, it always implies that it is an inferior towards whom it is exerted; this is the necessary pre-requisite for the exercise of this particular form of Christian and moral virtue. In like manner it is evident that a stoop, a descent from some dignity or previous elevation, is always supposed in the exercise of this branch of virtue. It always implies a resignation of some claim to a superior station, a foregoing of some advantage or pre-eminence. It is also necessary that such humiliation should be perfectly voluntary; a voluntary lowering of ourselves beneath the station which was previously occupied; a laying down of some advantage or dignity There is a strong contrast supposed in a series of acts of condescension, or even in one, between the station we previously occupied and that in which we place ourselves. There is also an implied opposition between something we possess and something we resign, and the station to which we are reduced in consequence of resigning it,—the station to which we bring ourselves,—which forms a powerful opposition or contrast to what we might have assumed or previously possessed.

If our Saviour condescended, in the instance before us, it is manifest there must have been some previous elevation from which he descended—from which he passed to those acts which are here specified. It is necessary, in order to make out an example from our Saviour's case, to specify the particular circumstances here implied, which stand opposed to other circumstances: the elevation must come

first, and the voluntary depression of himself must come afterward. This is implied in the very nature of things. In all acts of condescension we must suppose the person who performs them to be acting in a manner perfectly voluntary; there must be no degradation in the case, nor any thing that occurs by what we call chance or accident, nor yet the usual arrangements of Providence: nothing that thus occurs can give any scope to the exercise of this disposition. Though the manner in which that depression may be borne may evince much patience and equanimity, and much of the proper spirit of Christian resignation to the Divine will, yet it cannot be called an act of condescension, if it is to be traced to the irresistible operations of Divine grace, and much less still if it is the inevitable consequence of an irresistible law of nature. No one ever thought of praising the greatest sovereign on earth on the ground of his condescension in being a man, though this places him in the most essential particulars on a level with his subjects; a participation of human nature being a greater instance of equality than any circumstance that can produce inequality. No one, I say, would think of praising him on that account, because it is an effect of a law under which he was born, and which excludes his choice and volition.

But not only is every instance of condescension supposed to involve the exercise of choice; but there must be no very forcible obligation, no such strong and palpable obligation to the act that expresses the condescension, as that the contrary of it would shock our moral feelings, would appear exceedingly unbecoming, and excite a great degree of moral disapprobation. Though condescension be a great ornament to the character of a Christian, and springs from the principles of his religion, it is of a very different nature from the obligations of justice or even of humanity. It is of such a nature, indeed, that it is always supposed the not exercising it would not at the same time have destroyed all claim to virtuous and honourable conduct. If there be a forcible obligation to such sort of conduct, that conduct can never be entitled to the praise of eminent condescension. For example, nothing can be more plain than that it is the duty of every man to exercise humanity and strict justice towards all with whom he has to do. But, as the obligations to humanity, in cases of extreme distress, are very forcible and strong, the neglect of them lays a person open to great blame; and the practice of them, in some instances, in proportion to their great obligation, deprives the conduct of the title to high praise and commendation. In all cases the more palpable the obligation to conduct is, the less is there praiseworthy in complying with that obligation; and, on the other hand, the fainter the previous obligation is supposed to be, the stronger is the instance of virtue from attending to so comparatively feeble a sense of obligation.

Now, it is manifest, that if our Saviour be proposed as a pattern, it must be in some instance wonderfully condescending and humble, different from what might have been expected; that we must not merely look for what is virtuous and worthy, but for that which is so extraordinary and singular as to justify his being exhibited, in this part of his

conduct, as our example. If he be proposed as an imitable model of condescension, it must be for the exercise of this virtue in a very eminent and extraordinary degree; for nothing else can justify his being held up as a pattern to all ages. If, while it was imitable in its kind, it had not surpassed all comparison in degree, it would then have excited a vicious competition,—it would have contradicted the very purpose for which it was produced, which was to set our Saviour inexpressibly high in our esteem, and excite us to emulate his conduct, as far as we are able, with the most entire consciousness that we can only make an imperfect approach to it. We must look, then, for some very extraordinary instance of condescension in our Lord, something which must strike all eyes, something which cannot be accounted for without supposing inexpressible love in the breast of the Saviour, and such an infinite compassion towards a lost world as must place him beyond all comparison, or even the power of being imitated, in this respect.

Now, there are two ways of interpreting this passage of Scripture; and these remarks have been made to enable us to judge which is the best interpretation, which best corresponds with the intention of the sacred writer. If there be any doubt about the meaning of the text separately taken, and it is capable of two distinct interpretations, that must be allowed to be the just one which best corresponds with the purpose for which the passage is produced; that which furnishes the argument for which the passage is brought, that which most illustrates the particular moral duty intended to be inculcated, must be confessed to be the true one, in opposition to that which does not inculcate that duty. It is allowed that an attention to the scope of a passage, and a consideration of the purpose for which it was written, is one of the most certain guides.

In interpreting this passage, and in determining which is to be preferred of contrary interpretations, you must consider, not merely what meaning the words may bear, but which of the meanings proposed best corresponds with the intention of the inspired writer, by exhibiting our Saviour as a marvellous example of condescension. If there be a capacity of putting another construction on the words without any great force or violence to them, which, at the same time, does not exhibit a striking example of condescension,—one which deprives our Saviour of the place he here occupies as a pattern, on the supposition of which it becomes difficult to conceive of any condescension at all remarkable, —we are justified in setting aside that interpretation; not simply because it appears less natural in itself, but because it is quite unsuitable to the place, by destroying and invalidating the purpose for which it is brought.

I shall briefly propose to you the opposite interpretations which have been given to the passage before us.

First, then, let us take that of those who deny the divinity of Christ and the incarnation, and, of consequence, all the doctrines connected with them: their interpretation is as follows:—"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God," that is, say they, being possessed of extraordinary miraculous powers

"thought it not robbery to be equal with God;" which they interpret, whether justly or not I shall not now inquire, *did not eagerly catch at, or was not eager to maintain*, the idea of any likeness to God, or equality with God,—"but made himself of no reputation;" that is, say they, made himself poor, or reduced himself to a state of poverty and meanness;—"and took upon him the form of a servant," which word they interpret *slave*, because, if the term servant stood, it is plain there could be no instance of condescension; they therefore consider him as subjecting himself to the abject state of a slave;—"and was made in the likeness of man," which, say they, is like common men, not distinguishing himself by outward distinctions, but placing himself on a level with the meanest part of mankind;—"and, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Now this is the interpretation of those who would set aside the pre-existence of Christ in a state of majesty previously to his entrance into our world, and the obvious argument that hence results in favour of condescension from the pre-eminent dignity and glory of the Saviour. But let us consider whether this interpretation can possibly stand, consistently with the pre-requisites we have before mentioned; whether the instances here adduced can possibly exhibit any striking example of condescension on the part of the Saviour. "Being in the form of God," on the supposition of its meaning his being possessed of miraculous powers, must be the only elevation he possessed above common men. This was his great distinction; but *this* he never laid aside. Here, therefore, instead of his conduct exhibiting a great example of condescension, the station he occupied he never came down from; he never lost it for a moment; for the exercise of miraculous powers continued through the whole of his ministry with increasing splendour and advantage. With respect to the translation I have adverted to, and which I shall not now combat, because the requisite criticisms appear to me very unfit for a popular assembly; let us take it that he did not eagerly catch it, or was not eager to maintain, his equality and likeness to God, still I affirm that this is not an instance of *condescension*, because there is upon creatures a forcible obligation not to contend for equality with God: and although it would be extremely criminal not to comply with it, yet there can be no high degree of virtue in abstaining from so atrocious a degree of guilt. For a subject to refrain from assuming the dignity of sovereign would excite no admiration; no one would think of highly praising his virtue because he did not raise a standard of rebellion against his sovereign. In proportion to the force of the obligation to abstain from such pretensions, in the same degree is such conduct considered only in a negative way; that is, as exempted from censure, but not entitled highly to praise; in some cases, indeed, not at all. But the apostle brings it as a proof of condescension and humility, that Christ Jesus did not eagerly affect, as they say, an equality with God, or did not *catch at it*. How can that be an instance of *condescension?* The example must surpass, I apprehend, all human comprehension. "But made himself of no reputation," or, as

the expression literally is, *emptied himself*. Emptied himself of what? And, it is added, "took upon him the form of a servant." We might suppose that his emptying himself must mean his divesting himself, as the expression signifies, of something before possessed, of some distinction and glory before mentioned; and the only one, even in the esteem of our adversaries, is the form of God; but, upon their supposition, he did not empty himself of it at all; he retained it; for, during his whole ministry he exercised miraculous powers, and never more so than in the resurrection of Lazarus, which immediately preceded and accelerated his death. But, the text says, "he made himself of no reputation:" you may suppose that the writer is going to tell us for what reason he took upon himself the form of a servant. Here, the "form of God" being mentioned before, it is manifest that the "form of a servant" is the intended antithesis. But, upon the supposition of Jesus Christ having no existence before he came into our world, there can be no interpretation given to it, unless we interpret *servant*, *slave*, and suppose that he degraded himself to the service of a common slave. But if Jesus Christ acted the part of a slave, or sustained the character of a slave, it must be either in relation to God or to man. With respect to men, it is manifest he did not act the part of a slave, he never sustained that capacity at all, much less took upon him that character permanently; he never was in captivity: it was not then his relation to society. With respect to his Heavenly Father, it cannot be supposed that it can be applied to his service to God; nothing can be so absurd: no service which the Divine Being can be supposed to prescribe to an accountable creature, can be viewed in a degrading light. And where is there any example of the term slave signifying a very mean servant of God? Are not the angels themselves styled the servants of God? Does not Paul call himself the servant of God? Does not the angel in the Apocalypse style himself the fellow-servant of John? Would our very adversaries themselves so exceedingly disfigure the language of Scripture as to style these the *slaves* of God? What can it then be for, but to answer a purpose perfectly palpable, without being at the same time able to assign any just and proper meaning to the term? "And was made in the likeness of men:" here it is represented as an act of great condescension in our Saviour that he was made in the likeness of men; but how could he assume any other appearance than that of a man? how could he fail to appear in that character, with no other attribute belonging to him than that of a human being? "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Now, these expressions evidently are intended to introduce a proof of our Saviour's great condescension and humility; but none of them answer this purpose in the least degree, but on the supposition of there being some previous dignity or rank from which he descended. There is no contrast on the supposition of mere humanity, between this and the previous state; there is no forcible or palpable opposition between what he became and what he was: he always *was* a servant, he always *was*

in the likeness of man, could be nothing but man; and yet his being so is represented as a marvellous instance of condescension and humility in the Redeemer! On the supposition that Jesus Christ did not exist before he came into our world, the order of things is inverted; for the dignity of our Saviour, his elevation, came *afterward*, upon this supposition, and his depression came *first:* he had no elevation of an earthly kind at all from which he could condescend, and he is the greatest example, if he were no more than man, of a person raising himself to great dignity and authority from the meanest and most abject beginning. No "form of God" was perceived in him in the commencement of his ministry. He possessed miraculous powers, it is true; but he possessed them to the end, and these he never lost. "My Father worketh, and I work." Upon the supposition of his mere humanity, the contrast is of a different kind: he is the most wonderful example of a person rising from the most obscure beginning, commencing in lowly circumstances, and ascending to grandeur.

But if we take the expressions according to their obvious and popular import, they afford the most striking illustration of the purpose of the apostle in exhibiting the condescension and humility of the Saviour. "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." Here the form of God and the form of a servant are contrasted with each other; and as the form of a servant is universally understood as acknowledging that he was a servant, what can we suppose the being in the form of God to mean, but that he was God; though that may not be its only meaning? He is said to have taken upon himself the form of a servant: here try the meaning of those who oppose the divinity of Christ, that he was not eager to catch at, or to retain the likeness of God; and then, upon the supposition of his being the Son of God, possessing the Divine nature, and uniting himself to mortal flesh, you will find that the latter perfectly corresponds with the intention of the apostle. And his emptying himself, and taking upon him the form of a servant, is, indeed, a great instance of condescension, on the supposition of his being a Son; for there is a visible contrast between the being a son and a servant, which the apostle observes when he remarks, that "though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." There is also, upon this supposition, a plain meaning assigned to the whole, the words of existence differing from the words of assumption. "Who BEING in the form of God, MADE himself of no reputation, TOOK upon himself the form of a servant, was MADE in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he *humbled himself*." For here we have the state he formerly possessed expressed by the word BEING; and the word MADE, signifying that he became so by being made so; agreeably to what the apostle John says, "The Word was with God, and the Word was God;" and further, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." The same apostle, Paul, expresses the reason of his assuming a nature that did not belong to him, an inferior nature:—"Forasmuch

as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." But what possible contrast of this nature can be found upon the supposition of Christ's mere humanity? Where was there any descent from the form of God? And why should that which could not be avoided, which was not voluntary, be expressed in the way it is,—"Took upon himself the form of a servant,"—"humbled himself," and so on, when the very nature of things, the universal law of nature, rendered it impossible for him to be other than a mere man, and consequently a servant of the Most High God?

The doctrine of Christ's humiliation and incarnation is expressed in the most forcible manner, and worthy of our most attentive admiration and adoration. "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself;" he *still* humbled himself. He was not satisfied with being found in fashion as a man, which was a wonderful act of condescension; he was not satisfied with taking upon him the form of a servant; he not merely assumed a very low station in society; but he still humbled himself: he descended lower than the mere level of human nature required; he descended deeper and deeper, and was not contented till he had reached the very bottom of humiliation, till he "became obedient unto death." Nay, even that was not sufficient; there was one death more ignominious, more painful, more replete with agony and shame, than any other; and for the purpose, the glorious purpose, of his coming into our world, he selected that death, he determined to die that death, that very death; and made that his peculiar province in which he should appear, to the destruction of our spiritual enemies, and the conquest of the powers of darkness. "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." It was from this cross, which was the lowest step to which he could possibly descend, that he arose to his crown; it was from thence that "he ascended up on high," that he was elevated to the right-hand of God; that there might be exhibited in his person the most wonderful contrast of the original dignity which he laid aside, then of the scene of shame and suffering which he endured, and afterward of the majesty and glory with which he invested the nature in which he suffered. He first descended from the throne to the cross; and then, in order that he might take up our nature with him, and make us partakers of his glory, he carried a portion of that nature from the cross to the throne, ascended into heaven, and from thence gives a portion of the benefit of it by the outpouring of his Spirit, by the preaching of the gospel, and the saving of innumerable multitudes of them that believe; and all this in consonance with the purposes of God, whom it became, as the Great Legislator, "in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

There is only one expression more on which I shall make a remark; and that is, that it is not said he *became* a servant, or *became* a man: all this is *implied;* the form of expression is different. Nor is it here asserted that he was God, though this is strongly implied. But it is

thus expressed: "Who, being in the *form* of God, took upon him the *form* of a servant, and was made in the *likeness* of men." Though this plainly implies that Jesus Christ was God, yet the form of expression, no doubt, includes something more; it is intended to express a distinct idea from his being called God; and it appears to me to correspond exactly with the design of the apostle, for his design was to contrast our Lord's state at different times. He had assumed a form under the old dispensation wherein he appeared in various ways, or in different manifestations. When Joshua was about to enter on his war with the Canaanites, he observed a majestic and glorious personage standing over-against him with his sword drawn in his hand; and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay, but as Captain of the hosts of the Lord am I come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant? And the Captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy." The same command God gave from the burning bush. And in Ezekiel you find, "one in the form of the Son of Man seated on a throne," with a sapphire firmament; and Jesus Christ is represented as distinct from the Father, presenting himself to the Father; so that he is said by the apostle Paul to have been tempted of the Israelites in the wilderness. He manifested himself, but he manifested himself in the form of God, with a majesty and glory suited to his work. But he laid aside that form; he divested himself of it, and took upon him the form of a servant, a human form; and not merely a human form, but he humbled himself still more, and became obedient unto death. He was *found* in fashion as a man; it was a wonderful discovery, an astonishing spectacle in the view of angels, that he who was in the form of God, and adored from eternity, should be made in fashion as a man. But why is it not said that he WAS a *man?* For the same reason that the apostle wishes to dwell upon the *appearance* of our Saviour, not as excluding the reality, but as exemplifying his condescension. His being in the form of God did not prove that he was not God, but rather that he was God, and entitled to supreme honour. So, his assuming the form of a servant, and being in the likeness of man, does not prove that he was not man, but, on the contrary, includes it; at the same time including a manifestation of himself, agreeably to his design of purchasing the salvation of his people, and dying for the sins of the world by his sacrificing himself upon the cross. Besides, there is a peculiar propriety in these terms *fashion* and *likeness* of man, though not intended to exclude his proper humanity; for there is a high and glorious distinction in the humanity of Christ as contrasted with every other: every other man is tainted with sin, and partakes of original corruption. But when the angel addressed the Virgin Mary, he said, "That holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." From that contagion which belongs to the human race he was exempted by a miraculous conception. Every other man possesses two parts, body and spirit; but this divine man this "God-

man," consisted of three component parts,—a soul, a body, and that Eternal Word, or *Logos*, which formed a part. He is represented as taking upon himself this form, and "being found in fashion as a man," exalted to the adoration of the universe, which beheld the greatest wonder that ever was exhibited to the world, in Him that was God becoming man; for, if it be a wonder that God should *make* man, how much more astonishing that God should *become* man! "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name:" this is the reason. If you ask, how came a portion of human nature thus to be dignified? how came dust and ashes (for such was a component part of the Saviour) to be placed at the right-hand of God, in the midst of the inaccessible glory? It was—because in that nature he suffered, that he was humbled and bowed to the cross; and this was the way in which he ascended to his crown. What an example is this of the force of humility and the efficacy of condescension; of the wonderful power which, according to the rules and laws of the kingdom of God, condescension, patient suffering, and lowliness have in raising us to true dignity. This is the way the Saviour ascended to the crown.

Be it remembered, "He *became* obedient." There was, therefore, no necessity to obey at all. But he assumed voluntarily a nature which made him capable of suffering: and he obeyed in that nature even unto death, "the death of the cross;" in order that he might make it becoming the character of God, as a Moral Governor, to grant pardon to a whole race of apostate and guilty, but believing and penitent, creatures.

And yet we are told that Christ is not to be called a Saviour exclusively; we are told that Paul, and Peter, and others shared in the glory of saving mankind. Nay, we are told that all this argument of the apostle in the text, conclusive as it is, both from the words and phrases which are employed, and from the disposition in the mind of Christ which the whole of the reasoning implies,—that all this, instead of proving the pre-existence and divinity of Christ, proves nothing of the kind. Indeed, further, the leader of the Unitarians in the present day declares, that no words can ever be clear enough to prove to him that Christ is God; and that if he should find any such words in the Scripture, they would only serve to weaken the evidence of the truth of the Christian revelation, and would not convince him that the statement was true. With such men we can have no communion. Such a spirit shuts up all the avenues to truth and conviction; nay, it is the height of arrogance and practical infidelity in a creature like man. For it not only leads to error,—dangerous, fatal, destructive error, growing out of a spirit diametrically opposite to that inculcated in the text,—but it goes to the frightful length of setting itself above revelation; of limiting the wisdom of the Infinite Mind; by affirming that the revealed declarations concerning the incomprehensible God cannot be true: thus subverting the whole foundation of faith.

Be careful then, my brethren, that "the same mind be in *you* which was also in Christ Jesus." If you wish to be great in the kingdom of

God, go in the same path. If you wish to possess true dignity, lower yourself. If you wish to reign with him, you must also suffer with him: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." We cannot follow the Saviour without pursuing the same path; we must tread in the same steps: "If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me;" and "Where I am, there shall also my servant be;" for "he that honoureth me, him will my Father honour."

This wonderful mystery of our redemption is of the most practical tendency; not only because it exhibits such affecting views of the evil of sin, and of the price of our redemption, but because it shows the connexion between humility and true dignity. The glory of the cross consists in this—that it is the way to the crown. The Christian religion is distinguished from all others, by turning men's minds from aspiring to dignity here, inducing them to forego their own good, to cast away their lives, to make shipwreck of all but faith, to give up themselves to God's will entirely, to follow wherever the Saviour leads, and to press into the celestial kingdom through agonies, and crosses, and torments—through every possible obstacle. This is the way the Saviour went, and it is in this way we must expect to be partakers of his glory. "Let *this* mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

The time forbids my enlarging upon this subject, by pressing the practical conclusion from it in its different branches; but I cannot close without urging upon all, "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus;" "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is one of the first principles of our religion, one of the elementary truths of Christianity, that "He who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich." "Let the same mind be in you."—You who are possessed of property, devote *that* in the way it becomes the servants of so divine a Master. Consider the use *he* would have made of that portion of this world's good, which he declined as an example of patience and humility. Consider to what purpose *he* employed his heavenly powers; and to the same purpose employ your natural advantages and civil resources.

When did he employ that word which commanded angels and devils, and subdued the very elements of nature, for the purposes of ostentation? When were his words any thing but spirit and life? When did they operate to any purpose but to communicate health to the dying, purity to the guilty, pardon to the sinful, and salvation and benefits to all around him? "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." You possess a portion of this world's good: if you are true Christians, you will consider this as belonging to your Lord, as belonging to the poor of his people, as belonging to the world—to all but yourselves, and will consider all as having a much greater property in it, morally considered, than yourselves; you will regard yourselves as the stewards of God, and the most unjust persons (though not amenable to any human tribunal, but to your Saviour and your Lord) if you employ them to any other purposes than those of beneficence. If you deem it peculiarly honourable to die rich, and to leave

estates afterward to your children, to have them "called by your own name," that name will be a name of infamy. No, my brethren, be assured such a mistaken course will *cancel* your name, will blot it out of the Lamb's book of life for ever. Let then "the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." And those who are elevated in rank, let them not use it merely for the purpose of levying homage from men, of making a vain show, of appearing in artificial splendour. And those who are possessed of influence, let them use it also for the glory of God, and the good of their fellow-creatures. Never was any one so exalted as our Saviour, and never did any one make such a use of his exaltation. He shrouded it in the deep veil of humanity; he concealed it from the view of the world. None but the piercing eye of faith, illuminated by the Spirit of God, could behold it. The world knew him not. "*We* beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Do *you* then, my brethren, employ your influence in that manner. Never make it the means of keeping at a distance from you the poor, the distressed, and the afflicted. "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate." "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Do not dwell on the contemplation of your own greatness, do not separate yourselves from your fellow-creatures. Do not suffer yourselves to be hedged in and fenced round from them by the riches of this world; but communicate them to others, and pray for the blessing of God upon the right use of them, that they may turn to incorruptible riches and righteousness; that these perishing riches and this evil mammon may not seduce you from the right way to the everlasting mansions. If you are not faithful over a little, how shall you be faithful over much? and if you are not faithful to that which is the property of God, who lends it to you for a time, but gives to none a discretionary use of it, how shall he give you "that crown of righteousness that fadeth not away," that glory which will be a part of your nature, which will satisfy your souls, and make you great, and happy, and blessed, to all eternity?

"Let nothing be done," saith the apostle, "through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Let men learn of Jesus Christ that humility which disposed him to behave as if he had been the lowest and meanest of all. Our blessed Saviour was not unconscious of his high dignity, but he knew that it was important to exhibit the *spirit* of his religion in great humility. When he knew that he was shortly to go to his Father, and that "the Father had given all things into his hands, then he took a towel, and girded himself, and washed his disciples' feet." When he was about to take possession of universal empire, and heaven, earth, and hell were to be submitted to him,—when he knew that he was just about to be crowned with immortal glory, after he had sustained the Divine frown for the salvation of men, even "*then* he took a towel, and girded himself, and washed his disciples' feet, saying, Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am; if I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one

another's feet,"—to condescend to the lowest office of Christian beneficence and love.

Again: "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," in his entrance into the world: consider with what sympathy he regarded mankind, and what drew him from his exalted seat of majesty on high. How did he look down upon a distant race far removed from him, and compassionate their misery! how did he, as it were, for a season annihilate himself! how did he take their curse upon him, and invest himself with their nature! He looked upon them with unutterable and tender compassion: "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." You live among men dead in trespasses and sins; you see nations innumerable sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death. Consider what compassion actuated the Saviour's breast in coming down from heaven to pay the price of our redemption, to make peace with God, and bring in everlasting righteousness. What compassion touched his holy and beneficent mind, inducing him to die a sacrifice for the sins of his people! Do you have the same mind: compassionate the distant and miserable children of men involved in darkness. Carry your eyes to the remotest borders of the earth; and be not satisfied until the whole earth is full of the knowledge of the Lord, till all men have seen the salvation of God. Let no distance of place, no difference of circumstances, prevent your exerting yourselves to spread the knowledge of Him "who made himself of no reputation." Let nothing prevent your feeling a participation of the common nature. God has provided for sympathy by making you "of one blood;" so that you must act contrary to the laws of nature, if you do not sympathize with your fellow-creatures. "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus;" then will the religion of Christ extend itself far and wide. Let this mind distinguish the followers of Christ; and all men will confess that God is among you of a truth. You will be all of one heart, and one mind; you will be actuated by such a desire as will render you beneficial to all your fellow-creatures, as will make you the "light of the world," and "the salt of the earth." Then would iniquity stop its mouth, and so you would confound infidelity and impiety. Seriously study the doctrine of the cross, place yourselves there, consider what are the morals of the cross; consider what are the dispositions the cross inculcates; what is the influence of the fact that you are purchased, redeemed, and, by his Spirit, prepared for a seat at the right-hand of God; what the everlasting advantages which accrue from being purchased by such blood, saved by such humility; what the doctrines of the Saviour's incarnation, sacrifice, and ascent to heaven inculcate on Christian hearts. It opens a fountain of love, of wonderful and inexhaustible compassion; and it is at that fountain of love we should study; for we shall never be truly happy till we *do* study the spirit of our religion at the foot of the cross. We should enter more deeply into the dying love of Christ, that we may "comprehend, with all saints, what is the height, and depth, and breadth, and length of that love which passeth knowledge, and be filled with all the fulness of God."

Finally, my brethren, we see here the great and intimate connexion between the practical principles of religion, and the great doctrines of Christianity. Take away the incarnation of our Lord, and his sacrifice upon the cross, and these sublime and glorious truths lose all their meaning: this great example dwindles into nothing, if we lose sight of Christ's dignity, glory, and humility. It is this which renders his sacrifice of infinite value. It is this which renders his cross so inexpressibly awful and so interesting. It is this which makes it so infinitely precious to his people. The cross of Jesus Christ is the appropriate, the appointed rendezvous of heaven and earth;* the meeting-place between God and the sinner: thus the principles of the cross become the savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. Deprive Jesus Christ of his dignity, deprive his person of divinity and pre-existence as the Son of God, and all these momentous truths dwindle into inexpressible futilities. Doctrines meant to warm and kindle our hearts fill us with perplexity. When we look for a glorious mystery, we find nothing but the obscurity and perplexity that make men rack their invention to find out the meaning of those passages which it is plain the apostle poured forth in a stream of exquisite affection and delight.

But "we have not so learned Christ." Hold fast the cross of Christ. You who are not acquainted with the Christian religion, come to Jesus Christ by faith; cast yourselves upon the dying love of the Saviour; receive him by faith. And those of you who *have* received the Saviour, study him more and more; impress still more and more upon your minds the lessons which Christ crucified teaches. This is the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation; and by means of this only shall we grow up into conformity to our blessed Lord and Saviour: which God grant of his infinite mercy. Amen.

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## V.

## THE GLORY OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM.

PSALM cxlv. 11.—"*They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power.*"†

[PREACHED AT KETTERING, IN JUNE, 1813.]

THE absolute dominion of God is a subject worthy to be celebrated by all creatures: it is the frequent theme of praise in the Scriptures, which were dictated by the Holy Ghost.

There is another kingdom, which God has intrusted to the hands

* See p. 85–88.

† Printed from the notes of the Rev. S. Hillyard, of Bedford. For Mr. Hall's own notes, see p. 88–92.

of his well-beloved Son—the mediatorial kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the subject of the most exalted praise, and of the most glorious prophecies of the Old Testament, as well as of all the histories, doctrines, and revelations of the New Testament. This is styled the kingdom of heaven, and of God: it is the kingdom which the God of heaven has set up among men upon the earth. It is contrasted with the kingdom of the power of darkness; and its subjects are described as being translated out of the kingdom of darkness, into "the kingdom of God's dear Son,"* which is a kingdom of "marvellous light."

Whether the Psalm before us is designed, in particular, to celebrate this dispensation of the Son of God, I shall not now inquire; but as the kingdom of Christ is so conspicuous an object in both Testaments, and is the only one among men by whose government their happiness can be secured, it cannot be improper, from the words before us, to direct your attention, on the present occasion, to some particulars relating to the glory of this kingdom.

I. The glory of this kingdom is manifested in its origin. It had its origin in infinite mercy and grace. It was the object of the divine and eternal purposes of the Father; an object to which all other purposes were subservient. It entered into the counsels of the Eternal before the foundation of the world was laid. It was a grand design, intended to include the reign of God over the mind of man; a purpose to establish a kingdom, the subjects of which should be raised to be partakers of the same nature as their sovereign.

In order to establish this kingdom, it was necessary that the Son of God should become incarnate; the "mighty God" must be a "child born unto us," that he might have the "government laid upon his shoulders," and be the "Prince of peace" to his redeemed people. God purposed to have his tabernacle among men, and to be their God; but this he could not do, consistently with his truth and holiness, till an atonement was made to his law in the death of the person of his Son. The institution of sacrifices under the law intimated that "without the shedding of blood there was no remission;"† their insufficiency evidenced the necessity of a sacrifice of transcendent value: "Then, said he, sacrifices and offerings thou didst not desire; lo! I come to do thy will, O God."‡ Thus the foundation of the kingdom was laid in the incarnation and atonement of the Son of God; a foundation proportionate to the grandeur and beauty of the edifice that was to be erected.

The doctrines of the gospel were, and are, the grand instruments in the hand of the Lord Jesus for bringing souls into subjection to his sceptre. The King must ride forth conquering and to conquer; all his subjects must be rescued and subdued: but what a battle is that in which he engages! "Every battle among men is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood;" but this is "with burning and with fire." The warfare is entirely spiritual; it is carried on by the light of truth and the burning of conviction. The mere testimony of

* Colos. i. 13. † Heb. ix. 22. ‡ Psalm xl. 6-8.

the gospel, in the mouth of the witnesses, produced effects more wonderful than any that were ever produced by the violence of the sword. by this the powers of darkness were shaken, their temples deserted. and their oracles silenced. Heavenly truth combated with sophistry and error, and gained a decisive victory, though her opponents were armed with all the persecuting powers of the kingdoms of this world. The Psalmist, foreseeing the contest, said, long since, "Gird thy sword on thy thigh, O most Mighty, and in thy majesty ride on prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness."* These have had no share in the extension of human dominion, but were the principal instruments that were used in the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. To these, in his hand, and by his Spirit, the success of the gospel is to be ascribed: by these his people become a "willing people in the day of his power;" a conquered, yet a willing people; led captive, yet obedient. This is a glorious manner of raising a kingdom, worthy of him who is a Spirit, and who reigns by spiritual and intellectual means in the hearts of his people. Could we trace the means by which God has established his empire, it would fill our minds with admiration and our lips with praise: then should we 'speak of the glory of his kingdom, and talk of his power."

II. The glory of the kingdom of Christ is manifested in the manner and spirit of its administration.

The last words of David describe the manner of administering this government:—"The anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel said, The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain."†

The most essential quality in the administration of any government is justice; and justice is most conspicuous in this administration. The Sovereign confers no benefits on his friends, and inflicts no punishments on his enemies, but what are consistent with righteousness. "With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins."‡ He will render to each of his subjects, not *for* their works, yet, *according to* their works. He establishes his holy law as the rule of their conduct, and makes use of such motives to excite them to holy and spiritual obedience as are suitable to their nature, both as rational and as fallen creatures. As the law was first employed, so it is still used for conviction, for alarming the consciences even of the redeemed and the regenerate, and to excite to repentance and to renewed exercises of reformation.

The administration of this kingdom is also benign and gracious; it

* Psalm xlv. 3, 4. † 2 Sam. xxiii. 1-4. ‡ Isaiah xi. 4, 5.

is indeed a kingdom of grace. The throne is a throne of grace, and the sceptre is a sceptre of grace. He revealeth his grace, which is his glory; and thus he captivates the hearts of his people. He, in his great kindness, invites to him all that are athirst, all that are "weary and heavy-laden,"* and assures them that they shall find rest and refreshment. "He delivers the poor, when he cries, the needy, and him that hath no helper." He is the husband of the widow, and the father of the fatherless in his holy habitation. "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst," he graciously says, "I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."†

In earthly kingdoms the subjects are governed by general laws, which must necessarily be very inadequate to the variety of cases and occurrences. It is impossible that the multiplicity of actions, and all their individual shades, should be at all times considered and distinguished: hence has arisen the proverb, "*Summum jus, summa injuria.*" But our King is intimately acquainted with all hearts, and, being present in all places, he can apply his acts to individual examples, and appropriate smiles and frowns to each, as if there were no other beings that participated in his attention. In human administrations, the law extends only to outward acts; it relates only to objects of sense; insomuch that a pure spirit, disengaged from the body, is free from its sanction: but the kingdom of heaven is a spiritual one—it extends to the heart: it relates not to meats and drinks, but it is a kingdom that is "within you,"‡ and relates to "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."§ It is founded in communion with Christ: by his Spirit Christ lives in his members; their souls, whether in the body or out of the body, are always in his hands; he is Lord both of the dead and the living; he adjusts himself to all cases, through every part of his vast empire. In earthly kingdoms, the utmost that can be done is to lay down rules, to prescribe laws, and to sanction by rewards or penalties; but Jesus Christ can write his laws on the hearts of his people. "They are engraven, not on stone, but on fleshly tables."‖ He knows how to speak to the heart; and "they know his voice, and follow him; but a stranger they will not follow, for they know not the voice of a stranger."¶

It is justly considered a high excellence in a ruler, that he is disinterested, that he pursues no interest of his own, apart from the general good of the empire: this is the very flower of royalty; and those who have thus distinguished themselves have been justly considered as the greatest benefactors of mankind; they have been obeyed and loved while they lived, and foolishly idolized and worshipped when they died. But never was any one so disinterested as the King of Zion, who laid down his life for his people, while they were yet enemies. He wields the sceptre of universal dominion: he chains death and

* Matt. xi. 28. † Isaiah xli. 17, 18. ‡ Luke xvii. 21.
§ Rom. xiv. 17. ‖ 2 Cor. iii. 3. ¶ John x. 4, 5.

hell, quells the devils, and overrules all things for the good of his church. Though he sits at the right-hand of God, he could not enjoy even that station, were it to continue a solitary one. "Father," says he, "I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory."* "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."† He blends the deepest condescension with the highest majesty. He is a lion against their enemies, but to them he appears as "a lamb in the midst of the throne." The whole of his history is a history of the sacrifice of selfish feelings. The glory of the Father, and the good of man; these engaged his heart, these brought him from heaven, these regulated all his actions and sufferings; and he rested not till he could say, "Father, I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."‡ Well may we "speak," then, "of the glory of his kingdom, and talk of his power."

III. The glory of the kingdom of Christ appears in the character of his subjects.

The character of a people for greatness and for virtue is part of the glory of any kingdom; and it must not be omitted here. The Divine Ruler will derive much of his glory from the change that he has wrought in his people. "This people have I formed for myself," says he; "they shall show forth my praise."§ As this change is derived from above, there is no foundation for boasting, yet the change si not the less real: it is the communication of the Saviour's image and spirit: and, when he comes, he will be glorified in his saints.

I cannot enter largely into a description of the subjects of this kingdom, nor is it necessary; but a few observations may be made.

1. These subjects are enlightened; they have just conceptions of things; they are delivered out of darkness, which envelopes the rest of mankind, as the children of Israel had light in the land of Goshen when the habitations of the Egyptians were in darkness. They see things as they are: they see them, in some measure, as they are seen by Jesus, the "true Light;" they form right estimates of objects, as they are holy or sinful, temporal or eternal; they reckon that all worldly treasures and delights are nothing and vanity when compared with the spiritual and everlasting riches and pleasures of Christ and his kingdom.

2. The subjects of this kingdom are renewed: the Spirit of God changes their heart; they are made imperfectly, yet truly holy; they have a principle in them that aims at perfection; their characters are mixed, but the best part struggles against the worst, and will finally triumph. It is in this kingdom where patience, purity, humility, faith, and love to God and men, reside. Whatever of true holiness is to be found on earth, here you must find it: "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."‖ But these are renewed after the image of God; there is something divine impressed upon

* John xvii. 24. † John xiv. 3. ‡ John xvii. 4
§ Isaiah xliii. 21. ‖ 1 John v. 19

their characters; they have a principle in them that comes from God and leads to God, and inspires their souls with earnest longings after him. "My soul followeth hard after God."* "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee."† They have been reclaimed from their revolt, and are truly loyal; they are "called, chosen, and faithful." From their wanderings they have "returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls;" they lament that they ever were his enemies, that they ever lived at a distance from him; and it is now their sincere desire to obey him while they live, and to breathe out their souls in his service.

3. The subjects of this kingdom have in them a preparation for perfect blessedness. They that do not belong to Christ are disqualified for heaven, but those that belong to him have the elementary preparation for heaven; they have that which meetens them "to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." They are not entirely cured, it is true, of all the infection of sin; the venom of the "old serpent" is not expelled: but they are under a restorative process; they are under the method of cure; they are taking the medicine which is of sovereign efficacy. All the love and joy that glow with celestial fervour before the throne of the Heavenly majesty is only the consummation of seeds like those which are sown in the hearts of believers: "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart."‡ They are sown in their hearts: and when that which is sown, or is to be sown, shall be matured, Jesus Christ will present unto himself "a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing."◊ And what a spectacle will this be! how will the saints themselves be astonished at their attainments! It will require an eternity to know ourselves, much more to know the Fountain whence all these beauties and glories have been derived. Then, indeed, shall we "speak of the glory of his kingdom, and talk of his power."

IV. The glory of the kingdom of Christ is manifest in the privileges that are attached to it.

The privileges are transcendently great, far beyond our comprehension. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath laid up for them that love him;"‖ but the Spirit of God, which searcheth all things, in some measure manifests them to us by his word, and gives us a taste for them in our experience.

1. Peace is a peculiar blessing of this kingdom. The Ruler is called "The Prince of Peace." Of the increase of his kingdom and peace there shall be no end. This begins in reconciliation with God; the healing of the great breach which sin has made. With respect to them, the great controversy which has opposed earth to heaven is at an end: they are reconciled, free from condemnation, delivered from that cloud of wrath which overhangs the rest of the world; they are

* Psalm lxiii. 8. † Psalm lxxiii. 25. ‡ Psalm xcvii. 11.
◊ Ephes. v. 27. ‖ 1 Cor. ii. 9.

justified by faith, and therefore have "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The consequence of peace with God is peace with one another; a spirit which unites men in a wonderful manner to their fellow-creatures, and especially to their fellow-christians. This, when it is diffused, will produce peace among all families and nations; it will be an antidote against all the animosities and discords that have prevailed in the world.

2. The dignity of the subjects of this kingdom is another privilege. Is it considered an honour for a king to have a large train of nobles, who can trace their origin through a long line of progenitors? Are these the strength of the throne? What a noble race are the subjects of Christ's kingdom! To "as many as receive him, he gives the power to become the sons of God."* This is the highest of all titles. Their earthly descent is not noticed; "it doth not yet appear what they shall be:" but this is their nobility—"Now are ye the sons of God, and if sons, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." "What manner of love is this which the Father hath bestowed upon us?" All these sons shall be advanced to the kingdom; they shall every one of them be kings and priests unto God, and unite together in ascribing glory, and honour, and praise, and power, unto Him who redeemed them, and conferred this honour upon them." They shall have dominion over their sins, over the world, and over Satan, who shall be "bruised under their feet shortly." They will be invested with a holy office, reigning under Christ, and for his service and glory, for ever.

3. Immortality shall be the blessing of this kingdom: the subjects shall partake of endless life; a life that shall never be extinguished. In the Scriptures we read, "Whosoever believeth in Jesus shall never die. The fathers ate manna in the wilderness, and are dead; but he that eateth of the bread that I shall give him shall never die."† He that keepeth the sayings of Christ shall not taste of death. Death, in the Scripture sense, includes that separation from God which begins in spiritual and is completed in eternal death;‡ this is that of which believers cannot taste. They receive in them the embryo of eternal life: the spiritual life rises up into life eternal, and will be displayed in its perfection in the world of glory. As subjects of Christ's kingdom, his servants are immortal; whatever affects their frail bodies nothing can separate them from the love of Christ.

What an important blessing is the possession of eternal life and the resurrection of the dead! These terms include everlasting felicity in the presence of God: the privilege is ineffable and invaluable, surpassing our apprehension, or any comparison that can be made. To enjoy the smallest portion of this blessing is to be superior to all the greatness of the present state: the least in the kingdom of heaven is higher than the most exalted of the rulers and the philosophers of the world. We shall shortly see this to be the true representation of the

* John i. 12. † John vi. 58.

‡ See p. 99–102, of "Exegetical Essays on several Words relating to Future Punishment," by Professor Stuart, of Andover, United States; a work in which philological acumen and research are finely blended with sound discrimination and a genuine love of truth.—Ed.

subject. Wicked men shall see it to be so, when, between them and the righteous, "there is a great gulf fixed;" good men will find it to be so, and their spirits will even fail within them, when they behold the order of the court of heaven, and the majesty of the kingdom.

These blessings which I have mentioned will not only be put within the reach, but made to be the possession, of the subjects of the kingdom of heaven.

The benefits that result from well-regulated governments on earth are generally such as restrain from the pursuits of evil, prevent interference with others, remove obstructions, leave open various avenues to the prosperity of individuals. Each subject must pursue his own course, and make his own fortune; but in this kingdom, positive blessings are conveyed. "The Lord will be to his people a place of broad rivers and streams."* "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, and hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."† He not only subdues our enemies, but delivers us from our trials; while he himself becomes a source of satisfying good. "My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you."‡ "I give unto them eternal life."§

I might mention some other properties of this kingdom, which, though they do not enter into the essence of it, are very important.

It is a growing kingdom. At first it was small, but it had in it an expansive power; it was "a little stone hewn out of a mountain without hands," but it shall become "a great mountain, and fill all the earth." It has grown, and is growing; "and of its increase there shall be no end."‖ "He must increase; he shall reign until all things are put under him." He goes on "conquering and to conquer:" the last enemy shall be overcome, and be bound to the wheels of his chariot. The Scriptures are much occupied in these things. Prophets thought as much of missions, their labours, and their successes as we do: they employed the most glowing language, and the sublimest strains, in their predictions of the glory of Messiah's kingdom in the latter day; they snatch from earth and heaven, from the sun, the moon, and stars, the fairest and the grandest images, to represent the state of the church at that desired period; they levy a tribute upon universal nature, and make all things contribute to illustrate, as they will in reality contribute to advance, this kingdom.

This is a subject, then, my brethren, which can never be exhausted; you may speak of it through eternity! Open all your hearts, utter the most astonishing eloquence, call forth the host of angels to assist you in celestial songs; and still fresh views will burst upon your minds: you will appear for ever only to be at the beginning of the theme, only to be standing upon the borders of Immanuel's land: you will be called upon perpetually to rejoice, and again to rejoice, while you "speak of the glory of his kingdom, and talk of his power."

* Isaiah xxxiii. 21. † 1 Pet. i. 3. ‡ John xiv. 27.
§ John x. 28. ‖ Isaiah ix. 7.

In connexion with those qualities which I have mentioned, the *perpetuity* of this kingdom must endear it, above all things, to a good man: this indeed crowns the whole. It is a perpetual kingdom; it shall never be removed; it shall never be taken away to be given to any other people; but the saints of the Most High shall continually possess it. It shall rise upon the ruins of all other dominions, and shall itself never be subverted.

Let us then rejoice at the tokens which we see of God's purpose to extend this kingdom. Our eyes have seen great and wonderful things: God is doing much for his church; we have advantages beyond any of our predecessors. Such a period as this has not been witnessed since the days of the apostles: all events seem to be pointing to the final issue; and this should reconcile us to live in a time of desolation. In the midst of the darkness that surrounds us, a bright point is visible that forebodes the dawn of a brighter day. God is overturning, overturning; but it is to prepare the way for *his* coming whose right it is, and who shall reign for ever.

The kingdoms of this world are changing and falling to ruin. Let us not be dismayed at this; they are made of changeable materials. We ought not to wonder if the mortal dies, and if the changeable changes; but ever rejoice that we receive "a kingdom which cannot be moved."* Let us have grace, while we see these things, "to serve the Lord acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.

This kingdom, my brethren, will advance in the world when we depart out of it. It is a kingdom, at present, consisting of two parts; there is an upper and a lower province: in the lower province the subjects are required to struggle and fight; when called hence, they shall triumph. Then shall we know what is meant by the glory of this kingdom, when "God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes," and when "the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed us, and lead us to living fountains of water;"† when we shall "rejoice before the throne, and reign for ever and ever."‡

Let us, while we live here, sincerely pray and labour for the advancement and glorious increase of this kingdom, which embraces all the elements of purity and happiness. "This is all our salvation," and should be all our desire. Beyond this, there is nothing to be hoped for; without this, there is nothing on earth that can render the prospect of death tolerable, or life worth possessing.

Finally, then, let us look to ourselves, that, while we hear these things, we may possess a personal interest in this kingdom. "The law and the prophets were until John:" but now is the kingdom of heaven; and let every man be pressing into it. Press into it—strive to enter. Strive as in an agony: "for many shall strive" imperfectly, "and shall not be able." Let it be your determination, by the aid of promised grace, to surmount every difficulty. Press into the kingdom; for behind thee is the wrath and curse of Almighty God; but within is a place of safety, of peace, and joy. Put your feet within the limits

* Heb. xii. 28. † Rev. vii. 17. ‡ Rev. vii. 9, 15.

of this kingdom, and it will be as one of the cities of refuge to the men that were pursued by the avengers of blood; and the farther you penetrate, the more will your peace and joy be promoted.

To be within this kingdom—how important! Why are there, then, any of you that are not earnestly seeking it? If you have not felt a concern about it before, what are your present thoughts? Is what we have advanced all imagination? Is it only a *fancied* empire that has been represented to you? Is there such a kingdom among men? Have you heard of it, have you seen it? And is the Saviour, the Lord of his church, wooing your souls? Is he asking leave to come in? Does he say, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in?"* Open then the door, and let the King of glory come in. If he visits you, it is that he may reign in you; and then he will bless you with his salvation There is no one wise that does not yield to the Saviour: all are fools who are not either rejoicing in the evidence that they are in this kingdom, or earnestly desirous of it. Be not content that this kingdom should appear before you for a time, and then vanish away for ever; say not, I shall see it, but not for myself. Oh, thou that art exalted to heaven, take heed lest thou be thrust down into hell! The kingdom of God indeed is come nigh unto you: it is nigh you in the gospel, it is nigh you in the efforts of the present time, it is nigh you in the endeavours of your ministers, it is nigh you in every sermon you hear, and in every ordinance you attend. It is nigh you; and you will never get quit of this thought: it will be as a sharp arrow that will drink up your spirits to all eternity. When it is far from you, when between you and the blessed subjects of it "there is a great gulf fixed,"† you will for ever cry, Once it was nigh me; every Sabbath it was nigh me; every day it was nigh me; for months and years together it was nigh me; but I refused it; I thrust it from me; I would have none of the Saviour's counsel, I rejected his reproof: and now—it is past; it is gone; the things of the kingdom are for ever hidden from my eyes! Beware, lest that come upon you which is written; "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish."‡ "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."§

* Rev. iii. 20.
† Luke xvi. 26.
‡ Acts xiii. 40, 41.
§ Psalm ii. 12.

## VI.

## GOD'S WAYS, THOUGH OFTEN INSCRUTABLE, ARE RIGHTEOUS AND JUST.*

PSALM xcvii. 2.—*Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.*

[PREACHED AT LUTON, MAY, 1815.]

THIS psalm commences with a statement of the most important doctrine of religion; a doctrine which is the foundation of all serious piety,—the rule and dominion of God over his creatures. It then calls to rejoicing in that great fact. In every time of trouble this is the Christian's consolation; and it is his chief joy in his best moments. He who is "above all" continually conducts the machine of providence, and superintends all things in every part of the universe. This is the unfailing source of comfort to a good man,—"The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice."

In the text we have a concession made, perfectly consistent with the great truth before propounded: "Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." Two propositions are contained in this text, to which I now propose calling your attention.

I. "Clouds and darkness are round about God."

II. "Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne."

I. "Clouds and darkness are round about God." The figurative language in the poetical parts of the Old Testament is frequently taken from the historical books, and refers to the facts therein recorded: thus the appearances of God to the saints and patriarchs in old times are the origin of the figure in our text. If you look at the history of these appearances, you will find they were all accompanied with clouds and darkness. The cloud of the Lord went before the children of Israel when they departed from the land of bondage. This cloud had a dark and a bright side, and was a symbol of the Divine presence: thus it preceded the people in all their marches, as a pillar of fire by night, and of a cloud by day.† When Solomon dedicated the temple, the glory of the Lord filled the house, and the priest could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord filled the house.‡ When God descended upon Mount Sinai, "there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud. And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, upon the top of the mount."§ When our

* Printed from the notes of the Rev. Samuel Hillyard.
† Exodus xiv. 19, 20.
‡ 1 Kings viii. 10, 11.
§ Exodus xix. 16, 18, 20

Saviour was transfigured before three of his disciples, "a bright cloud overshadowed them," from which proceeded the voice of the Father, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."* And Peter, who was present there, afterward referring to this fact, says, that the voice proceeded "from the excellent glory."† Thus, in all the symbols of the Divine presence, there was a mixture of splendour with darkness and obscurity. So it is in the operations of Providence: in a moral and figurative sense we may say, that clouds and darkness surround all the operations of Divine power and wisdom.

Clouds are emblems of obscurity; darkness, of distress. The works of God's providence are often obscure and productive of distress to mankind, "though righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne."

In the present state of the affairs of the nations, we see the interference of Divine Providence; and yet it is surrounded with clouds and darkness. Never was the hand of God more conspicuous, yet never were men less able to penetrate and comprehend his deep and unfathomable designs.

As this is the Divine method of government with respect to affairs of a larger scale, so it is also in instances of a smaller and inferior kind: it is thus, in the removal of the most eminent, holy, and useful characters, that while we acknowledge the hand of God, we say, "clouds and darkness are round about him." Such removals we have experienced: "The fathers, where are they; and the prophets, do they live for ever?" No. Such as seemed most necessary in the church, the pillars of the temple, are removed, and many are trembling for the ark of God. We are taught to "be still, and know that he is God," since "what we know not now we shall know hereafter:" and we feel it necessary, in our obscurity and distress, to refer to the great principles of his government, "Judgment and righteousness are the habitation of his throne."

The course of events has not been such as might have been expected from the known character of God. If we look into the book of history we shall perceive that there is much disorder in earthly scenes, much confusion in the affairs of men; and was this to be expected from a God of order and wisdom? We know that he is a being of infinite mercy, that out of his infinite fulness he loves to communicate happiness to his creatures; yet we see them oppressed with calamity, surrounded by miseries; and we find that man has, in all ages and in all stations, been "born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward."

Again, we know that God, in his great love to our world, has devised a plan to raise men to happiness and glory; his regard to this plan, and the objects of it, appears in all the doctrines of revelation, in all the miracles by which they are supported, and in all the prophecies and glorious things that are spoken concerning the church, by which our expectations have been greatly raised. But how have those

* Matt. xvii. 5. † 2 Peter i. 17.

expectations fallen short of their accomplishment; what a small part of the world is enlightened by the beams of the "Sun of Righteousness;" how narrow are the limits of the gospel; how little has been done by Christianity, compared with what might have been anticipated from the Divine principles, the character of the Author, and from the interest it possesses in the heart of God. We have, as yet, wrought almost no deliverance in the earth; paganism yet strikes deep its roots in various lands; Mahometanism has plucked up the "good seed of the kingdom" in countries where that seed brought forth fruit abundantly: even in what is called Christendom, how little have the known and blessed effects of the gospel been manifested! Jesus Christ came to reconcile all who receive him into one family; to make, of many, one body; to compose discords, to allay violent passions and animosities, to make wars to cease, and to give peace, and love, and harmony to his followers; but those called Christians have been inflamed and armed against each other. From the beginning, dangerous errors have produced noxious effects; the "mystery of iniquity" began to work; those who "named the name of Christ" have inflicted greater barbarities upon one another, under the influence of superstition and bigotry, than their fathers had suffered from their pagan persecutors. The woman that "sat upon the scarlet-coloured beast" is indeed "full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns;" she is still arrayed in "purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stones, and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abomination and filthiness and fornication; and upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth. And I saw," says the apostle, "the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus; and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration."* And what could be less expected, what more surprising, than that Christianity should occasion the discovery of so much vileness? Nay, where genuine Christianity is taught, how small has been its progress! how few seem to be converted to God, compared with those who are enemies in heart to him, and to the kingdom to which they profess to belong! Instead of Christians being of one heart and of one mind, they are armed with malice and envy against each other, on account of some differences of sentiment and judgment; even persons of real piety give way to prejudice and party zeal, which prevent, in a great measure, the operation and effect of pure Christianity. Thus this blessed system of religion seems to have been the occasion of more feuds and strifes among its professors than any other interest has produced since the world began. Look at the state of the world; see nations professing the name of Christ rushing into hostilities, building all their hopes of future peace upon the success of their plans of bloodshed and carnage, breathing defiance and slaughter in their words, and displaying them in their enraged countenances. When will the end of these things be? Were it not for the sure word of prophecy,

* Rev. xvii. 4-6.

we might be ready to imagine "God had made all men in vain." A great part of the world is no better than if Christ had never come to save mankind, and the gospel had never been proclaimed. Some who hear it are even the worse for what they hear; for where it is not "a savour of life unto life," it is "a savour of death unto death."

I might expatiate still more on this portion of the text; but sufficient has been said to prove that things have not been according to expectations founded on the known character of God, but that "clouds and darkness are round about him."

We proceed then to the second class of remarks, suggested by the passage before us.

II. "Judgment and righteousness are the habitation of his throne."

Righteousness is the essential perfection of the Divine Being. It is his nature; if there had been no creatures for him to govern, he would have had an unchangeable and invincible love of rectitude.

Judgment is the application of the principle of righteousness in his government of his creatures and their actions; it is a development of his rectitude in the management of the affairs of his great empire; it is that superintendence over all, whereby the operations of all things are directed to some vast and important end. Judgment implies measure and equity, in opposition to what is done without rule and consideration. All the Divine conduct is equitable, regulated by rectitude, and every thing is directed by a judgment that cannot err.

Thus "Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." The throne of God is built, and stands firm upon these principles: they are the place, the basis, and the foundation of his throne. Though the clouds cannot be dispelled, though there is thick darkness round about, through which our eyes cannot penetrate; yet there are principles discernible through the light of revelation, and by the eye of faith, which may serve to subdue despondency, and lead us to acquiesce in all the measures of the righteous Sovereign. Though much obscurity must be attached to the government of the Infinite Mind, and great perplexities may be felt by those who attempt to scan his measures; yet some considerations may be suggested, which will serve to quell our anxieties and afford us repose under all the darkness, beneath his protecting power, his all-directing wisdom, and his paternal goodness.

1. Let us ever remember that the dispensations of God towards man are regulated by the consideration of his being a fallen and disordered creature. If we do not admit, or if we forget this, we are in great danger of falling into universal skepticism, and shall not be able to conclude, that "verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth." If man is now in the state in which he was originally created, all is obscurity and gross darkness; but if we understand that man is a creature who, by his own fault, has lost that favour with God which he once enjoyed, and yet is placed under a dispensation of mercy; frowned upon, but not given up to destruction; open to receive the grace of God under the gospel, and by the mediation of Jesus Christ; there is some light shooting through the darkness, by which we see the "righteousness and judgment" which are the habitation of his throne."

The fallen state of man must be kept in view to account for the severities in the Divine dealings with him. His banishment from paradise; the curse of the ground, by which it brings forth thorns and briers, and the sweat of the brow by which he eats his bread; the labour and sorrow of the woman in child-bearing; and, finally, the sentence of death which is passed upon man, and keeps him always in bondage; and the present state of society, the fraud, rapine, cruelty, lust, and contention,—are all accounted for only by reverting to the fall of man from the image and favour of God. Yet notwithstanding the severities of God, let it not be forgotten that there are mixtures of mercy which we have reason to admire. They that have forfeited all right to happiness must not complain if any drops of it are found in their cup. They that have lost the inheritance must not complain if any of its fruits are afforded to them. They that deserve to be banished into outer darkness must not complain if "clouds and darkness are round about Him" whom they have offended. "Why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?"*

They that deny the depravity of human nature are involved in perplexity, and speak on the subject of Divine government with such doubt, confusion, and perplexity, as increases skepticism in themselves, while it too often produces it in their admirers.

The doctrine of the fall of man must be considered as a fact: to a knowledge of this the Scripture conducts; it relates the circumstances of the original transgression; expressly asserts that "God made man upright, but he hath sought out many inventions;"† and that "by one man judgment passed upon all men to condemnation."‡

2. The Divine Being was not bound, in justice, either to prevent the disordered state of man, or to correct it when it had taken place.

All moral government has its foundation in the suitability of its laws and motives to regulate and influence a creature endued with reason, understanding, and volition. All that is necessary in the government of such a creature as man is that the law should be equitable, and that man should be originally possessed of faculties which rendered him capable of obedience. Were we to go further, and suppose that the Governor was obliged to see his law fulfilled, this would make him accountable to his own law, while the accountability of the creature would be destroyed. If the creature, besides having a righteous law and powers capable of obedience, must also be kept from the possibility of disobeying, the rule would return back, and become binding upon him that gave rather than upon him that received it. Though I feel incompetent to go far into this subject, yet, from what we know of the nature of God and of man, it may be safely affirmed that it cannot be required of the Divine Governor to secure the obedience of his creatures, any further than the law, as a motive, is calculated to have an effect upon rational minds. On what ground, then, can it be imagined that the world has a right to require God to prevent or to remedy moral evil?

3. The whole of those evils that form clouds and darkness round

* Lam. iii. 39. † Eccles vii 29. ‡ Rom. v. 18.

about God are either the penal or natural effects of moral evil. The terrors of conscience, the fears of death, restlessness and dissatisfaction of mind,—these and numerous other evils are partly the natural and partly the penal consequence of sin; and show that man is not in the state in which he was originally created, but is reduced by his disobedience to a state in which all things are "vanity and vexation of spirit."

With respect to evils of a physical nature, most of them are evident consequences of the state of man as a sinner. What is war, strife, contention, but the effect of evil passions; the natural fruits of apostacy? These are the actions and workings of the evil mind, malice, envy, pride, and covetousness. The sentiment of love, which unites to God, being broken, what effects can be produced but dissension and disorder—domestic, national, and universal! There is, indeed, less disorder and confusion than might be expected from the universality of the apostacy; the wisdom and goodness of God having checked a great proportion of the evil that would have proceeded from the corrupt fountain of our depravity. We can never sufficiently admire the wisdom and goodness of God for such institutions as preserve a tolerable degree of order in this fallen world. Many benefits result from those checks and restraints which are imposed upon men, even when the heart is not renewed.

But still further. God has established another kingdom in the midst of the kingdoms of the world. He has created a new race among the race of men; the men who are the "salt of the earth," and the "light of the world." They prevent that universal corruption which would work its ruin, and that darkness which would tend to destruction. Yet there is much darkness and corruption remaining: and if you ask how long it will continue, the prophet answers, "Until the Spirit be poured on us from on high;"* that is, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the only thing which can correct the evils that prevail among mankind. This grace is not conferred by the Divine Being in the character of a governor, but as the fruit of his favour: it is, however, the only cure; and hence, the most intense desires should possess our minds for the promotion of the gospel; not only that God may be glorified in the highest, but that on earth there may be peace and good-will among men.

4. Those that receive the grace of Jesus Christ are still in such a situation as renders a great part of their trials and miseries necessary. Many of the evils of a depraved nature still remain, and need to be subdued and removed. Pride must be abased; "covetousness, which is idolatry," abhorred; impurities cleansed; and malevolent passions conquered. This is a state of probation; and it is repugnant to reason to talk of a state of probation in which nothing is met with that is dark and painful. Besides, the virtues of the Christian must be perfected in the same way in which the Captain of our salvation was perfected: he must be conformed to Christ, and have fellowship with him in his

* Isaiah xxxii. 15.

sufferings. Jesus Christ is set forth as a type of all the happiness that accrues from suffering, from struggling, and from conquering: and we must resemble him in this respect. To this purpose our present state is adapted; every thing is so contrived as to afford opportunities of conquest. The pleasures of the world, the crosses of life, the remains of concupiscence, the venom of the "old serpent," and the insults, if not persecutions, of the wicked, are enemies by which we are beset; and we recover from their assaults, and overcome by the exercise of prayer, vigilance, and persevering struggles. "There is no discharge in this warfare,"—we must conquer or die. God will confer no distinction (I will not say, but where it is deserved) but only where it may be given as a recompense for service. The design of Christ is to raise his people to glory, to communicate to them the fulness of God; but as he obtained these blessings by his death, as he purchased them by his blood, so in the same path he leads on his people to his glory. Thus he makes all our afflictions and enemies preparatives to our victory and triumph. The Divine Being will display his infinite wisdom in leading his people through the wilderness: and they shall walk "in white," with "palms in their hands," and crowns on their heads, who "come up out of great tribulation."*

5. The moral evils of man, and the depravity of human nature, are often, in a great measure, corrected and subdued by the natural evils of life, and thus are made the means of conducting to repentance, reformation, and happiness. The Spirit is not generally given to lead the soul to God and the enjoyment of a life of faith, without being preceded by affliction and troubles. He leads into the wilderness, and then speaks kindly unto man; he destroys our idols, hedges up our way, surrounds us with difficulties, and pleads with us. Thus he deals with individuals, and thus also with nations at large. "When his judgments are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants thereof learn righteousness." The overflowing of a corrupt opulence, the abundance of prosperity, feeds as in a hotbed, all the bad passions of the heart. The sword, pestilence, poverty, pain, and innumerable other evils excite us to deep and serious reflection, and thus prepare us, by the influence of the gospel, and the operation of grace, to return to God. A sense of a superior hand is felt; the vanity of the world is discovered; the soul looks out for something on which to rest, and is prepared to hear the voice that says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." I doubt not but the cloud now gathering, and the judgments now about to descend, will be the means of casting down high thoughts, and "humbling the lofty looks of man, that the Lord alone may be exalted," and that the world may be filled with his glory. One temple of the Holy Ghost is of more esteem in his sight than all the splendour of palaces, than all the riches of the world. Jesus Christ is overthrowing all the grandeur of man, that he may gather out of ruinous heaps, and from a perishing world, the materials of an imperishable temple. He is taking out of every nation a people whom he will

* Rev. vii. 9, 14.

form for his praise. In his providence he is subverting, scattering, destroying, in order that he may find stones to polish for a temple into which he will enter, into which his Father will enter, and where they will abide. This is the one great end the King of Righteousness has in view. The preparatory scenes of the world are as a "valley full of bones, very many and very dry;"* but the Spirit of the Lord shall raise out of them a people upon whom he will breathe, and they shall live, and become a glorious army, animated by the heavenly grace. How is it possible, if we see things only with carnal eyes, that we should see them as God sees them, who directs all things with a view to an eternal state of being? Our "light affliction" may work for us a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things that are seen are temporal; but the things that are not seen are eternal."† It is only by looking at "things unseen and eternal" that we can derive true benefit from the miseries of life. Under the hand of God every thing is propelled, every thing temporal is rushing forward to give way to, or to be united with, that which is eternal. This is the development of the whole plan, the explication of all the complicated movements of providence. Look at the things which are eternal there is the state to which we are tending, where we shall know in perfection what we now know only in part, and shall be satisfied that all has been conducted agreeably to the known character of God.

6. Yet, let it be observed, even here the light of prophecy dispels many of those clouds which would otherwise obscure, for the present, the government and the throne of the Deity. We are assured that in the latter day the gospel will be more widely disseminated, that its influence will be more extensive and efficacious, that the superstitious prejudices and vices by which it has been so long opposed will give way; that the desert and the wilderness shall become a fruitful field, and "shall blossom as the rose;"‡ that all the kingdoms of the earth shall bring their riches and glory into the church, the whole earth shall be full of the glory of the Lord, and there shall be peace unto the ends of the earth. At what period this glory of the latter day will commence is not for us to determine; it is generally agreed the time draws near; how long it will last is, again, not easy to tell. The thousand years are perhaps to be calculated upon the same scale as other prophecies, wherein a day stands for a year, which would make them more than three hundred and sixty thousand years. Be this as it may, at that period the Spirit will be poured down from on high; the potsherds of the earth that have been striving will be dashed to pieces; the great Proprietor will come to fashion them anew: then "the fruitful field will be as a forest," and the forest "as the garden of God;"§ none shall destroy in all God's holy mountain; the sacred influence of piety will bring us back to a paradisaical state; the love, the harmony, the plenty which will abound will fill every heart with

* Ezek. xxxvii. 1-14.
† 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.
‡ Isaiah xxxv. 1.
§ Isaiah xxxii. 15; li. 3.

gladness; the temple of God shall be among men, the marriage of the Lamb will come; and the universal song will be, "Hallelujah: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!"*

If this period shall continue long, the miseries that once reigned will be forgotten, and all the disorder that was introduced by the fall will be as nothing, when compared with the joy of the restoration; the creation of a "new heaven and a new earth, wherein righteousness shall reign."

"Behold, the coming of the Lord draweth nigh; but who can abide the day of his coming?" He will come with his "fan in his hand." "He will sit like a refiner of silver." The chaff will be separated from the wheat; the visitations of the Almighty will find out his enemies; the phials of his indignation will be poured out upon the opposers of the gospel; wrath will come upon them in this world, preparatory to that of the eternal state. Let us "flee from the wrath to come." Let us consider the salvation of the soul to be the one thing needful. The body is only the tenement in which the soul is lodged, the case in which it is enclosed; the soul is all-important; "the redemption of it is precious;" "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"†

The gospel is the only refuge to which we can flee. It presents Christ crucified among you, shedding his blood as an atonement for your sin, willing to "save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him." O my friends, accept his grace; break off from every sin; ask yourselves in what you have offended; set your sins in order before you; remembering that if you do not, Christ will do it at the great day. Judge yourselves now, that you may not hereafter be judged, and sent to condemnation. Turn with humble penitence to the cross of Christ, and approach God by him; bend your knee before the throne of grace, plead the merits of the Redeemer's blood, and be "reconciled by his death."

May God grant you these blessings for the sake of his Son. Amen.

* Rev. xix. 6. † Mark viii. 36, 37.

## VII.

## ON THE DISCOURAGEMENTS OF PIOUS MEN.*

NUMBERS XXI. 4.—*And the soul of the people was much disco because of the way.*

[PREACHED AT BEDFORD, MAY, 1815.]

IT is generally understood and believed that the Old Testame in great part typical. The history of the deliverance of Israel is a of redemption by Jesus Christ; the paschal lamb a type of *the g* Passover. The journey of the people through the wilderness re sented our pilgrimage through this world; and the land of Canaan a shadow of the heavenly rest. Viewed in this light, many parts aff direction and consolation peculiarly suited to individual experience.

I shall take leave to accommodate this passage as an expression what frequently befalls the people of God in this world; their "sou are greatly discouraged, because of the way."

The present life is a way; it is not the end of our being: it is n our rest, it is not our abode; but the place of our pilgrimage, a pa sage to eternity.

There are two ways,—the way to heaven, marked out by the exampl of Christ, and the way to perdition, marked out by an evil world. *Bu* there are many discouragements that the Christian meets with, thoug he is in the way to heaven. These we shall point out in the firs place, and then direct you to some considerations to remove these dis couragements.

I. I shall point out the discouragements in the way; and in doing this I shall keep my eye on the pilgrimage of the people who were originally referred to in the text.

1. The way is circuitous, and therefore discouraging. This is suggested in the beginning of this verse: "And they journeyed from Mount Hor, by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom;" they took a way which was round about, which added to the tediousness of their journey. Their nearest route would have made it comparatively easy; but instead of taking this, they went up and down in the wilderness. When we consider what God had done for this people in Egypt, it might have been expected that all the way would have been prosperous; that joy would have been heard in their tents, and triumph attended their march; and it would have been seen that they were the people of God by the blessings which they enjoyed; but instead of this they met with delays, hinderances, and troubles, till they murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying, "Why were we brought out hither? Would to God we had

* Printed from the notes of the Rev. Samuel Hillyard.

died by the hand of the Lord in Egypt."* Thus, souls that are brought to Jesus, and delivered from the slavery of sin and the curse of the law, in their first ardour overlook trials, and think of nothing but enjoyments; they do not anticipate the fightings and fears that are the portion of God's Israel. After a time, through want of watchfulness and care, the love of their espousals begins to decline, the world regains a degree of influence, the Spirit is grieved, and they fear God has become their enemy: they seem to themselves to go backward, and indeed are in danger of doing so, if they neglect to watch and pray; and much time is spent in mourning, retracing, and recovering the ground that has been lost. This is too common a course: there is provision made for something better; there are promises and comforts which should encourage us to advance from strength to strength; but through our neglects we feel that we go backward instead of forward, and are therefore discouraged.

2. The way is through a wilderness, and is therefore discouraging. Moses reminded Israel of this in Deuteronomy: "You remember how you went through the wilderness, a waste land, not sown or tilled, where there was no trace of human footsteps, and where no man dwelled." A wilderness is distinguished by the absence of necessary sustenance: there was no corn, nor vine, nor olive; nothing to sustain life. Thus this world is a state of great privations; men are often literally straitened with poverty, penury, and sorrow, and know not how to conduct themselves in their difficulties: the supplies which they once had may be exhausted; and though they have seen the hand of God in affording them what was necessary on former occasions, they are ready to say, Though the rock has supplied us, and the manna has descended, yet "can God spread a table for us in the wilderness?" With respect to the blessings of this life they live by faith, and frequently have no provision or prospect for futurity.

But in a spiritual sense this world is also a wilderness. It has no natural tendency to nourish the spiritual life; nothing is derived from it of that kind: though spiritual blessings are enjoyed in it, the Christian knows they are not the produce of the soil; the "bread" which he eats "cometh down from heaven;" the perpetual exhibition and communication of that one bread is all his support. Jesus Christ says, "I am the Bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead; but he that eateth of this bread shall never die. My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed."† The ordinances of the gospel do not support and comfort us any further than there is a heavenly communication and influence attending them. This is not peculiar to the poor: the rich, who abound in worldly things, feel that this is a wilderness to their souls; they feel that there is something to which earthly treasures are not suited; wants which they cannot supply. The same bread that feeds the poor must feed them, or they will be lean from day to day: on this they depend as much as the meanest around them. David felt this when he said, "I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a

* Exod. xvi. 3. † John vi. 48-50, 55.

thirsty land."* "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. When shall I come and appear before God?"† "Deliver me from the men of this world, who have their portion in this life." "Then shall I be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness."‡ There was nothing on earth to satisfy him; he felt the present world to be a wilderness, because it was a state of absence from the Divine presence. The Christian is a child of promise and of hope, and his eye is directed to the "glory that shall be revealed."

Again: there is much intricacy in the Christian's pilgrimage. There were no paths in the wilderness; the Israelites could not have explored their way but by the direction of the pillar of fire and of the cloud: so the Christian knows not how to explore his path. There are doctrinal difficulties by which we are perplexed, and errors to which we are continually exposed, and which we know not how to escape but by attention to "the light that shineth in a dark place." There are voices that are heard in the wilderness, crying, "Lo here," and "Lo there;" but we must not go after them: we must "search the Scriptures,"§ and ask the guidance of the Spirit, or we shall never have the comfort that arises from right views of truth, nor hear the "voice behind us saying, This is the way, walk ye in it." I need not mention the various errors of the present day; but simply specify the two chief, which are, such a view of the doctrines of grace as destroys the necessity of holiness, and such a view of the Saviour as destroys the notion of grace. There are also many difficulties in practical religion; and thus we are again in danger of mistake. What shall we do to serve and please God? The general rules of Scripture are sufficient, if studied with an humble mind, for general direction; but they do not furnish us with immediate and particular directions in all cases: diligent inquiry is necessary, attending to the voice of conscience, giving up sensual desires and inclinations, and rejecting temptations presented in various forms. There is only one grand remedy, if we would walk aright: "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."‖

3. The way lies through a hostile country, and is therefore discouraging. We pass through an enemy's land. The Israelites went up in military array, marching in file; and they had not proceeded far before the kings of Edom and Moab, and the Ammonite, opposed them. They were obliged to unite the courage of the military with the assiduity of the pilgrim's life; they had to fight as well as travel. And so must we: on our pilgrimage we must gird on "the whole armour of God, taking the sword of the Spirit, and the shield of faith;"¶ we must conquer as well as advance; we must fight our way, or die. There are three great enemies—the flesh, the world, and the devil: these are allied, have perfect understanding with each other against us, and combine their efforts for our destruction. The Christian pilgrim becomes a marked character in the world; he dwells alone: the men around him take the alarm; they endeavour to imbitter his choice

* Psalm cxliii. 6. † Psalm xlii. 1, 2. ‡ Psalm xvii. 15.
§ John v. 39. ‖ James i. 5. ¶ Ephes. vi. 13–17.

and retard his progress. Satan is also alarmed, and he is never found to give up a subject without opposition.

A man going on in a carnal course will scarcely believe in Satan's temptations; he regards it as mere enthusiasm to think or speak of them; he has not felt them, and will not think they can be felt: but the Christian soon learns that he has to fight against "principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness." He finds his enemy assault him in various ways, and knows that he "must be resisted that he may fly from us;"* for "he goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."† The flesh is also an enemy. The Christian experiences the workings of carnality, a hankering after that which is evil, and to which he may have been addicted; as the Israelites after "the onions and garlic of Egypt." There is a tendency towards earth, as well as towards heaven; a principle that depresses and bends him downwards, as well as one that elevates and prompts him to soar above: he is forced to complain of "cleaving to the dust," and cannot always say, "My soul followeth hard after God." "There is a law in the members warring against the law of his mind."‡ He complains of "an evil heart of unbelief." There is in him an army with two banners; "the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh:"§ this renders it necessary that our life should be a continual struggle. These conflicts belong to every condition. Those that have most of the world are often most exposed, and are seldom less exempt than others from assaults; and no wonder that hereby Christians are often discouraged, especially when they feel they do not always succeed. Even when they are not vanquished, they sometimes lose ground; and when they have overcome, they are afraid of fresh conflicts, in which their strength may fail, and their enemies gain the advantage.

4. The false steps that are taken in the pilgrimage, and the consequent displeasure of God, are discouraging: there are so many errors and iniquities for which the Lord chastens his people, though he pardons sin as to its eternal consequences. How often did the children of Israel offend God and awaken his anger? and where is the son whom the Lord does not see fit to chasten? These chastenings of the Lord often drink up the spirit; they overwhelm the soul. "All thy waves and billows are gone over me."‖ They think of God, and are afraid. They cry, "Oh, be not a terror unto me,"¶ lest I suffer thy frown and be distracted. The bitter herbs are unpalatable; the fears of hell seize hold of them as terribly as when they were first awakened to a sense of sin and danger; they feel their frailty and tendency to depart from God; and they apprehend future trials, and know not how long the painful dispensation will continue. "Is his mercy clean gone for ever; doth his promise fail for evermore?"**

5. Total defection of men from the path is a great discouragement to those who still continue in the way. I do not think that all who

* James iv. 7. † 1 Pet. v. 8. ‡ Rom. vii 23
§ Gal. v. 17. ‖ Psalm xlii. 7. ¶ Jer. xvii. 17.
** Psalm lxxvii. 8

died in the wilderness were cut off as rebels; indeed it could not be, for Moses and Aaron were of the number: yet they were set forth as types to warn us of the danger of not entering into rest. Here was a shadow of the greater loss of them that "turn back to perdition." How many can we recollect of those who were once active and zealous in the cause of God, that have gone away and walked no more with Christ, of whom we say, "It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they had known it,"* "to turn again to the beggarly elements of this world!"†

Providence sets a mark upon such persons: their idols are snatched from them, and they become as pillars of salt to remind us of the danger of looking behind us. What deep searchings of heart are hereby occasioned! "I also shall fall by the hand of" the enemy; I have in me a similar nature with his, and may be exposed to similar temptations. "Lord, hold me up," or I shall not be safe. Nothing weakens the confidence of the Christian army more than the failure of those who appeared brave in the day of battle, and conspicuous in the ranks. When ministers and eminent professors fall away, our hands hang down; we suspect others; we are jealous of ourselves. "Search me, O God, and try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."‡ "Every one must give an account of himself to God,"§ and "let every one have rejoicing in himself, and not in another."‖

6. The *length* of the way is discouraging. The time occupied by the Israelites from their entering to their leaving the wilderness was forty years. Thus long were Caleb and Joshua in travelling through it. This was a tedious journey; such a one as was never performed before: a type of the journeys of the Church militant. The whole of human life, with all its toils and cares, is comprehended in this journey; there is no rest, no cessation of the pilgrim state, till life is finished. "Be thou faithful unto death," or all thy former toil is lost and will be of no avail. Now though human life is short in itself, yet to our limited conception it appears long; especially when passed in suffering and pain, "when the clouds return after the rain," and there is none to tell us "how long." In protracted afflictions is seen the patience of the saints. It is more easy to endure the greatest shocks of trouble, than to endure those pains which are more moderate for a long season. Patience is worn away by continued afflictions, rather than overwhelmed by the rolling wave. Those saints, who endure in private, though unknown, and perhaps unnoticed by their neighbours, are the bravest heroes of the Christian camp. We must, my brethren, hold out unto the end. We must touch the goal, or we run in vain; our last effort must be made in this journey, or we shall never reach the Canaan that lieth beyond the waters of the grave.

Thus I have given you a serious representation of difficulties and

* 2 Pet. ii. 21. † Gal. iv. 9. ‡ Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24.
§ Rom. xiv. 12. ‖ Gal. vi. 4.

trials; and it may appear discouraging to many: the people of God are much discouraged at times, when they know not how long they shall have to walk and be weary. But there is another view of our pilgrimage: it is not wise to hide our eyes from trials; let us, therefore, consider them well; yet let us, at the same time, inquire whether among these scenes there are not interspersed motives to support, encourage, and animate our minds.

II. I shall now, therefore, endeavour to direct you to some considerations to remove your discouragements.

1. Remember, the way you are in, believer, is "a right way," notwithstanding all that has been said. Infinite Wisdom has ordained it: and if you reach the end, you will be well repaid for all your toil, and will admire the whole of the pilgrimage; no sorrow will appear to have been too heavy; no path too gloomy. There was no bitter ingredient in your cup that could have been spared; no affliction but what operated to promote the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." You will look back and acknowledge that Infinite Wisdom directed the darkest path, and caused it to terminate in joy and glory unutterable. This is the way in which many have been conducted that are now in glory; they are gone up out of "great tribulation." There is a "great cloud of witnesses," who, "through faith and patience, are now inheriting the promises:" let us also, with patience, "run the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame."* Take the prophets and ancient saints as examples of suffering: think how they were tried. Remember the prison of Joseph, the reproach of Moses, the dungeon of Jeremiah, and the death of Isaiah. "Remember the patience of Job" under all his afflictions. God has heated the furnace for some of the most eminent saints seven times more than common, because they were endued with a divine power of suffering with patience, and were favoured with the presence of the Son of God. The people of God have been chosen in the furnace of affliction; the bush has been on fire, but not consumed, for God was in the midst to preserve it; and he not only preserves his saints, but gradually conforms them to his Son Jesus, who himself suffered: for this purpose he came into the world and united himself to human nature; wherefore arm yourselves with the same mind. Our sufferings are necessary, to wean us from the world and to deliver us from sin: "he that hath suffered is free from sin."† We must either suffer by self-denial, or be chastised of the Lord. "If any will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me:"‡ let him behold both the cross and the crown, and never turn aside from that path which leads to the crown, whatever cross he may have to bear. A man of this world, who is governed by sensual inclinations, and seeks after vain pleasures, is "dead while he lives."§ This was not the course of our Master; and, be it remembered, it is he who says, "Let him follow *me*."

* Heb. xii. 1, 2. † 1 Pet. iv. 1.
‡ Matt. xvi. 24. § 1 Tim. v. 6.

2. Another encouragement is, that God is with his people in the way. He was with Israel, to guide and defend them. They had visible tokens of his presence, and saw that he stretched out his arm for their protection, and the overthrow of their adversaries. Thus also, when Jesus sent forth his disciples, he said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."* If he lays upon our shoulders the heavy cross, he supplies unction for the bruises it occasions. If he leads into the wilderness, he "speaks comfortably;" he spreads a table there, "and his banner over us is love." "Greater is he that is with you than all that are against you." God is in the world as the great upholder, governor, and benefactor; but he is in the church by his special grace, as a vital principle, an ever-living friend to sustain, animate, and influence. With him we have communion, and from him communications of mercy. We are one with him; all our need shall be supplied: "as our days, so shall our strength be."† We may not know how to meet an expected trial; but grace shall come, and be all-sufficient for us. Only keep your face Zion-ward, and "though the young men faint, and are weary" in waiting upon the Lord, you shall "renew your strength, mount upon wings as eagles, run and not be weary, walk and not faint."‡ "His strength shall be made perfect in your weakness." "When I am weak, then am I strong;"§ most gladly, therefore, will I "glory in infirmity, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." "In all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him who loved us."‖ Only look not behind you, think not of turning back, and he "will never leave you nor forsake you."

3. To overcome the discouragements of the way, remember there is no other way that leads to heaven. You cannot reconcile the service of sin and the world with the hope of heaven and the enjoyment of everlasting life in that holy state, and in the presence of the holy God. Will you, then, forego the hope of Canaan; as you must when you yield to sin, when you give yourselves to the world? There is no other way to heaven than the way to which the Scriptures of truth direct you. You must "crucify the flesh;" you must "purify yourselves" by faith through the Spirit; you must be conformed to the Saviour; you must take up the trials of life with patience, or look for the punishment of death. The choice of Moses was truly wise; it was the only choice wisdom *could* make. Happy are they who choose like him; Canaan shall be for ever theirs. The Land of Promise was but a type, a shadow of their inheritance: it was a perishable inheritance; it was but a mere span, a moment of happiness and glory, compared with that which shall be revealed, of which, at present, we can only say we know but in part: for "it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."¶ A few moments there will banish all earthly trials from your mind; or you shall remember them only to enhance your bliss. The enemy, like the Egyptians in the Red Sea, shall be

* Matt. xxviii. 20.
† Deut. xxxiii. 25.
‡ Isaiah xl. 31.
§ 2 Cor. xii. 10.
‖ Rom. viii. 37.
¶ 1 John iii. 2

seen no more. The trials of the saints shall be left far behind, and sin shall never vex them again. How will this happiness repay all their toil! how sweet will be the remembrance of the bitterest herbs! how unspeakable and inconceivable the joy, when they shall be with angels, and justified spirits, and Christ, and God, in the kingdom of glory! We are lost in the contemplation of this sublime subject; yet we know that future happiness is greater than eye hath seen or ear hath heard. How should it transport us to think that we may be counted worthy of this high calling; that God hath revealed to us this glory! It is only by Jesus Christ and his gospel that "life and immortality are brought to light." It is by God's becoming man that man may become like God, a partaker of the divine nature. Let us not, my brethren, deem ourselves unworthy; let us not sit down content with inferior things, like Esau, who for "one mess of pottage sold his birthright." It is infinitely better to suffer in this life than to lie down in death. Go forward, then, Christian; go forward: "forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to those that are before."

I pray God that these plain truths may be blessed to your souls; that you may be stirred up to diligent perseverance in the ways of God; that you may be a comfort to the minister whom God hath placed over you; and that he may present you with joy at the coming of Jesus Christ. And if any of you have not yet entered on this way, to such we would affectionately say, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." Come, ye careless ones, "ye simple ones, turn in hither." You think not of death, but of the gayeties of life; you walk after the desire of your hearts and the delight of your eyes: but there is no happiness in your path; if you proceed, you *must* perish; for it leadeth to destruction. All your pleasure is but for a moment; there is more true pleasure in the roughest path of the Christian than in the smoothest road you find: you will never have peace, consolation, or rest, till you come to the Saviour. Come, and he will do you good: you shall have all the innocent enjoyments of life that will be for your real comfort; all your trials shall be ordered by wisdom and love; you shall have the best support in the day of adversity, and, in the life to come, everlasting glory. "All things shall be yours;" Christ your Saviour, and God the Creator of the universe, your God and Father.

We do not know what you may meet with by the way, nor what you shall enjoy in the end; but what we enjoy you shall enjoy. God will remember you "with the favour that he beareth to his own people, and visit you with his salvation." O, that every one might come! None would be turned away without the blessing: there is room enough; "there is bread enough, and to spare." We invite, nay entreat you, to leave those muddy streams, which must be given back in tears of repentance. Come and taste of the "water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."* Come

* Rev. xxii. 1.

and partake of these blessings. While you delay, your danger increases; if you utterly refuse, you perish! "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."*

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## VIII.

## THE VANITY OF MAN APART FROM HIS IMMORTALITY.†

PSALM lxxxix. 47.—*Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?*

[PREACHED AT BROADMEAD, BRISTOL, AUGUST, 1815.]

THE psalm in which these words occur is supposed to have been written on occasion of the calamities which befell the kingdom of Israel in the reign of Rehoboam; and the Psalmist appears to have been lamenting those distressing events by which the glory of David's family seemed to be extinguished. In the bitterness of his feelings, he is carried out from the particular occasion which excited them, to a general contemplation of the vanity of human existence. From these words I propose to show, that—considered merely in his present state, apart from any reference to eternity, and the prospect disclosed by revelation,—man (it may be truly said) is "made in vain."

1. The first thing that strikes us, in such a survey of our being, as circumscribed within the term of mortality, is *the shortness of its duration*. "Remember *how short my time is*." This circumstance, which cannot have escaped, or failed to affect, any reflecting person, is frequently adverted to by the sacred writers. "My days," says Job, "are swifter than a post: they are passed away as a shadow." "Behold," says the Psalmist, "thou hast made my days as a handbreadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee: as for man, his days are as grass: in the morning it is green; in the evening it is cut down and withered." The transient nature of his existence stamps an inexpressible meanness on man, if we confine our view to the present life; and forces us to confess that, laying aside the hope of immortality, "every man, at his best estate, is altogether vanity."

2. The same reflection must have occurred to most persons of a thoughtful character, when they have contemplated *the general state of that world* in which we are placed: the mischief and misery that pervade it: the disorder and desolation which the unruly passions of men perpetually introduce: the wantonness with which they rush to deeds of violence and injustice; the almost incessant national conten-

* Rev. xxii. 17.
† Printed from the notes of the Rev. Thomas Grinfield A. M., of Clifton.

tions, in which the destruction of one part of the human race seems to become the business and sport of the other. Whether the balance of good or of evil preponderate on the whole, is a question we may here leave undecided. In some more favoured conditions of society, it is probable there may be a predominance of good; in others, less favoured, of evil: but that such a question should exist at all is itself a sufficient proof how much evil exists in this world. Viewed, therefore, merely as they are here, and excluding the supposition of a future state, all men will appear to be "made in vain."

3. Again, when we recollect how many thousands of our species are born the *subjects of some inherent, incurable disease, or imperfection of body*, such as may be said to render their life a protracted malady; when we call to mind how many are constitutionally the victims of dejected spirits and a morbid melancholy, such as cast a gloom over every surrounding object, and dim their perceptions to the fairest scenes of life and nature (a case which is exemplified in the great and amiable Cowper); we are compelled to acknowledge of the multitude so circumstanced, that,—if we consider them merely as existing in that hypothetical state which terminates with death,—they also are "made in vain."

4. And, further, when we take into account those millions of mankind, who are condemned, through the whole of life, to *manual and mechanical labours;* whose day after day is consumed in a constant round of the same unvaried employment,—the twisting of a thread, the continuing the friction of a wheel, the exercise of the file, the saw, or the hammer, and similar operations, which have so little concern with mind, so little tendency to engage the intellectual powers by which man is distinguished from the surrounding creatures, that they are as well, if not better, performed by various machines of modern invention; who, that limits his view of man to this sublunary scene, can forbear to sympathize with the desponding Psalmist in the text? In labours like these, he observes, millions of those beings are employed who are created with a mind capable of looking backward and forward with endless activity of thought,—capable of comprehending truth and advancing in knowledge,—capable of enjoying a happiness commensurate with its own vast desires. The inheritors of such faculties are employed in labours like these; in the performance of which, after the practice of a few years, they attain such a facility and perfection that no room is left for improvement; and for the rest of life nothing remains but the repetition of the self-same labours; labours in which the mind is altogether passive and dormant, nor is any exercise afforded to the reason or the affections. Not that I would be understood to censure the mechanism of civilized society, which evidently requires this arrangement in a greater or less degree: but, walk the streets of a commercial or manufacturing city; observe the multiplicity of handicraft occupations which meet your eye at every point; and, without blaming the existing organization of society, I ask whether,—if cares like these are to engage the chief part of human attention (cares rendered, perhaps, necessary by the imperfection of

our present circumstances, but immensely disproportioned to the capacity of our nature),—if men are condemned to terminate their existence in these pursuits, and are not reserved for another and higher state of being, I ask whether the great majority of mankind are not "made in vain?"

5. But there are those, it may be said, who do not fall under this melancholy representation; *men of wealth, minions of fortune,* who bask in her smiles, and revel in her favours; whose circumstances seem to be formed by their will, and who appropriate whatever they desire. Surely, you will say, such "men of this world *have* their portion in *this* life;" surely an existence like theirs, even if we suppose it confined to earth, apart from any ulterior consideration, has a sufficient end in itself; and, though their existence is short, they are exempt from the charge of having been "made in vain." Now there is a delusion in this view: and if we examine the advantages which men of wealth possess over others, we shall find that nearly all the pleasures peculiar to superfluous opulence are reducible to two classes; the class of *sensual gratifications,* and that of *ambitious distinctions.*

(1.) And first, with regard to the *gratifications of sense* which the rich have at their command; how little *these* can be said to redeem their possessors from the lot of a vain existence,—how little *these* conduce to supply that happiness which is the end and perfection of our being,—will appear by the following considerations.

The pleasures of sense, in the first place, can never be proposed as an adequate end of our creation; because, in pursuing them we always regard them as subordinate to something of superior importance, our regard to which is allowed to be the just rule of sensual indulgence. The inferiority of these pleasures to something beyond and above themselves is never doubted: a wise man advises a proper abstinence from such pleasures for the sake of *health;* a good man, for the sake of *virtue;* either of which is justly regarded as an object superior to that which it ought to regulate. But the true end of existence must be something final, something beyond which nothing can be proposed as of superior magnitude: and unless there be alleged some worthier object of our creation than one which is thus referred to another which has a right to supersede it, it cannot be disproved that "men are made in vain."

Besides which, let it be recollected, in the next place, that the pleasures of sense, pursued beyond a certain limit, so far from tending to create happiness, tend to destroy it, by the very construction of those organs which are the instruments of sensual enjoyment. That craving after happiness which every bosom feels, and the satisfaction of which involves the perfection of our existence, cannot be supposed to attain its proper object in any of those animal pleasures, of which the pursuit (unless kept in continual check) leads to the extinction of happiness and existence itself. The proper object of this grand desire of our nature must be something, in the pursuit of which we may safely let loose the utmost energy and ardour of the soul; something essentially, entirely, and eternally good, in the pursuit of which we need not fear

lest we should injure ourselves, but may reckon upon benefit and success proportioned to our zeal and diligence,—the pursuit of such an object constituting, in effect, the proper business of our being.

And in the third and last place, the enjoyment of the senses cannot present to *human* beings the appropriate and distinguishing end of their existence, because they are only enjoyed by man in common with the lower animals. *That*, whatever it be, which forms the true end of *human* existence, must be something which is adapted to the great peculiarities of our nature as *rational* and *moral* beings: but sensual fruition is received in an equal, perhaps a greater degree, by the brutes. To what purpose this comprehensiveness of reason, this prodigality of powers, this grasp of memory, this vigour of imagination, this restless activity of hope and desire, if the inheritor of such high endowments were doomed to seek the perfection of his existence in the command of sensual gratifications? Few, in fact, are so infatuated as to believe that such gratifications are the end of their creation. Notwithstanding the ardour with which the pleasures of sense are pursued by many, still they are always regarded (at least where society is not unusually depraved) as matter of shame and concealment to their votaries; all thinking persons are anxious to redeem their character from the degrading imputation of devoted sensuality, by intermingling other and worthier pursuits with pleasures of this description: and he who should abandon himself, in the gratification of animal propensities, to the neglect of every higher aim, would be universally allowed to have lived "in vain."

(2.) But there is another class of pleasures, as was observed, with the command of which wealth supplies us; the *pleasures of ambition*, —the respect and homage which are paid to high station and splendid circumstance. Now, on an examination of these pleasures, it will be found that they are unreal and imaginary; that they consist of nothing more than a fiction of the imagination, a false elation of the mind, by which we may be said to *identify* ourselves, or to be identified by others, with all those varied instruments of pleasure which affluence commands; by which we *diffuse* ourselves, as it were, over the whole sphere in which we preside. Of those who place their happiness in pleasures of this class it may be most emphatically said, that "they walk in a *vain show*:" and could we assign no better end of our being than that which thus places it in a mere *delusion*,—a false *semblance* of enjoyment,—we should be reduced to confess that "all men are made in vain."

Thus it appears that neither the pleasures of sense nor those of ambition (to the one or the other of which classes all the pleasures of wealth are reducible) afford any adequate account of our existence as confined to the present scene; and that *men of wealth* are not, more than others, exempt from the mournful charge of the Psalmist.

6. To proceed. Neither can we exempt from the same condition *men of knowledge*, who pass life in the cultivation of intellect and the pursuit of truth; an object, it must be allowed, better suited to the nature, and better proportioned to the dignity of man as a rational

being, than those before mentioned; an object which too many, it is to be feared, have in every age regarded as the very highest which they could propose to themselves, as characteristic of a state beyond which they could aspire to none more exalted: and in which, if they could but escape from all intrusions of passion and accident, they would be completely happy, they would desire no higher order of existence.

That the favourite pleasures of such men,—the pleasures of knowledge and intellect,—are noble in their nature, exquisite in their degree, and permanent in their continuance, will not be denied by those who have sufficiently experienced, and who are competent to estimate them. But, in the first place, to how *few* are these pleasures confined! What a mere scantling of the race is qualified to enjoy them in any considerable degree! Not one person in a thousand has either the abilities or the opportunities requisite to their high enjoyment; while to the rest, to the great bulk of mankind, they are the hidden treasures of a sealed book. And can *that* be supposed the final object of our being which can be enjoyed but by a small proportion of those who inherit that being? Is it to be conceived that, while the million are "made in vain," only here and there a chosen individual is permitted to attain a destiny worthy of his nature? The truth is, of the few who make knowledge the aim of their engagements none can secure himself from the intrusion of disturbing passions o. distressing accidents. It is only in the smooth expanse of the lake, when there is no wind to agitate its bosom, that the forms of surrounding nature are reflected clear and unbroken: and thus it is only where the mind is in a state of undisturbed tranquillity that the pleasures of science and literature can be pursued with success. But the lights of philosophy are liable to be broken by the waves of adversity, and darkened by the clouds of grief; the man of study is obnoxious to the same external privations, —of health, friends, or fortune,—with other men; the invasions of calamity, to which all are exposed, will find him out in the most sequestered retreat; and, after all, he will be feelingly convinced that, if knowledge be the end of our being, and that being terminates on earth,—he, like all other men, has been "made in vain."

Besides which, we have it on the testimony of one of the greatest proficients in knowledge that ever appeared among men, that "increase of knowledge," far from being increase of happiness, "is increase of sorrow." And though this proposition may require to be received with some limitations, certain it is that the mere *knowledge* of things, the mere *perception* of truth, is something extremely different, something entirely separable from the *enjoyment* of things, the *possession of real happiness.* There is not between the two the slightest necessary connexion: there may exist in the same character the scantiest portion of the one in union with the largest measure of the other. We by no means find that, the more things we know, the more we enjoy our existence; and the simple reason is, that knowledge has its abode in the *understanding*, while happiness is seated, not in the understanding, but in the *heart;* so that the condition of the rudest peasant may be an object of envy to the most enlightened philosopher. In a

word, happiness is a state which we are *all* equally concerned to attain; but wealth and knowledge are conditions accessible only to a *few*. Happiness has its seat in the *heart;* but wealth and knowledge are not adapted to satisfy our *affections:* therefore wealth or knowledge cannot be supposed to constitute that proper happiness of man, without which he is "made in vain."

7. Once more. There yet remains another and a yet more elevated order of men, who place the grand object of their being in *religion;* who think of God, trust in God, and on all occasions devote themselves to do the will of God: men who, receiving the Scriptures as His own divine revelation, conceive that they are pardoned and accepted by their heavenly Father, through the mediation of the Son of his love; conceive that they are renewed and influenced by the power of His Spirit; and, regarding the "things which are seen and temporal" as preparatory to those which are "unseen and eternal,"—"set their affections on things above, not on things of the earth;" consider themselves as "dead to the world, and their life as hid with Christ in God; and trust that when He who is their life shall appear, they also shall appear with Him in glory." What shall we say of such persons? We say that, if this were the only state of being ordained for man, *they*, like others, would be "made in vain:" we say, with the desponding Psalmist, "Verily, they have cleansed their hearts in vain, and in vain washed their hands in innocence: we affirm, with the apostle Paul himself, "If in *this* life only they have hope, they are of all men *most* miserable," *most* worthy to be commiserated. For, according to this supposition, they are the *only* persons who are utterly disappointed of their object; the only persons who (by a fatal and irreparable mistake), expecting an imaginary happiness in an imaginary world, lose their only opportunity of enjoying those present pleasures of which others avail themselves; dooming themselves to grasp at shadows, while they neglect the substance; harassed with a perpetual struggle against their natural propensities and passions; incurring, perhaps, the enmity or ridicule of their fellow-mortals; and—if the supposition be true that there is no such future state as that which they anticipate—all this is in vain!

But that supposition is *not*, for a moment, to be believed: these men are *not* thus deluded; they are *not* to be thus disappointed; it is impossible to conceive that they are. The perplexity, the inconsistency, the palpable absurdity into which *those* are driven who argue upon the non-existence of immortality, the falsehood of revelation, proves, as far as proof can be expected, that *theirs* is a false hypothesis! Upon *their* hypothesis, man is the greatest enigma in the universe; that universe is itself a problem not to be solved: all is mystery, confusion, and despair! Bring in the light of revelation and immortality, the clouds and thick darkness in which the scene was enveloped disperse, and all is clear and harmonious. Man, with his astonishing endowments, is no longer "made in vain;" the universe, with its amazing phenomena, is no longer "made in vain!" We learn at once the cause and the cure of that vanity, in subjection to which "the

whole creation groans," together with man. The origin of our misery and death, the recovery of life and immortality, are alike brought to light. Man has fallen by sin from the favour of his Maker; hence all the disorders and evils that surround him: but a salvation has been provided; "God hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath committed to us the ministry of reconciliation; God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, *not imputing to them their trespasses!* *This*, my dear brethren, is the testimony of God in his own Word; and, though men may dispute its authority, "let *God*," we say, "be true, but every man a liar."

To attain a share in this salvation, to recover the true end and perfection of our existence, in the resemblance and the favour of "the *only happy God*,"—this is the great object of desire and pursuit to those whose eyes are opened to their real situation, whose hearts are awakened to a sense of their real want. And, "remembering how short their time is," they are the more in earnest that, by a glorious reverse of their naturally ruined state, they may prove at last to have *not* been "made in vain." They "pass the time of their sojourning in fear;" they are "sober, and watch unto prayer."—"As obedient children, they fashion not themselves after the lusts of their ignorance, but, as he who hath called them is holy, so they seek to be holy in all their conversation." In a word, they count all things as loss, for the excellence of the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour: for they "*know* whom they have believed;" they have the *fullest assurance* in their faith. On other objects, which are so eagerly pursued by the men of this world, they have closed their eyes for ever: forgetting the things behind, reaching forward to those before, they *press* forward to the mark and prize of their high calling; and, though racks, ropes, swords, or fires were to obstruct their way, they would *rush* through them all to reach their eternal goal! Jesus Christ is to them the very food of the soul, the very bread of life; and they make it the substance of their continual supplication, "Whatever beside is denied, *Lord, evermore give us this bread!*" Such are the views and affections which inspire true believers; such the object which, stretching into eternity, puts out, casts a darkness over, the brighest sublunary splendours; an object, apart from which it may be justly said, that "men," that "*all men, are made in vain!*"

The necessity and certainty of that salvation, that immortality, which the gospel reveals, is *one* and the *first* inference from what has been said: *another*, and the *last* inference I shall mention, is the extreme folly and misery of those who persist in the neglect of this salvation, this immortality. It is to throw away the end of existence, to sever ourselves from the possibility and the infinitude of happiness, and, in the awful language of Scripture, to "*judge ourselves unworthy of eternal life!*" If a vast sum of money were committed to us, and we suddenly discovered that by our own neglect the whole was lost, we should be affected, probably, with serious alarm and regret; but what must be our emotion,—what our consternation, remorse, and despair,—should we discover, at the last judgment, that we have lived *in vain*; that,

so far as our own interest is concerned, we have been made *in vain* that we have received the grace of God *in vain;* that, having neglected the one salvation, we are *lost*, lost in the scale of being; immortal creatures, *lost* to the great purpose for which our Maker gave us existence; *lost* to happiness; irrecoverably and for ever *lost!* What must it be to discover that the mistake we have committed is at once *infinite* and *irreparable;* that we have been guilty of an infatuation which it will require *eternity to deplore, and eternity to comprehend!* Now is the accepted time. Let us earnestly avoid such an unutterable calamity; let us choose the favour of God as the only adequate end of our being; and embrace the salvation of Jesus Christ as the only way to attain that end: in a word, let us act as those who are swayed by the conviction that the *Christian* is the only man of whom it can be said, in relation to eternal felicity, that he is *not* "made in vain."

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## IX.

## DEATH, THE LAST ENEMY, SHALL BE DESTROYED.*

1 Cor. xv. 26.—*The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.*

[PREACHED AT BEDFORD, MAY, 1817.]

In this chapter the apostle directs the views of Christians to the final consummation of all things; when the mediatorial kingdom of Christ, in our nature, having answered the ends for which it was established, shall be surrendered, "and God shall be all in all."

This kingdom is, in the mean time, progressive, and will be so till all enemies shall be subdued and placed under his feet. The apostle brings in the words of the text as an instance of this general proposition; but it may be proper here to remark somewhat of inaccuracy in our common version. That rendering does not seem to sustain the conclusion to which the apostle had arrived. It was his purpose to establish the perfection of our Saviour's conquest, the advancement of his triumphs, and the prostration of all enemies whatever beneath his power. Now, to say that "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death," by no means affords proof of this position. Though death might be destroyed, and be the last enemy that should be destroyed, it would not thence appear but that other enemies might remain not destroyed. But the proper rendering is, "Death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed."

Having made this observation, I would now direct your attention to the import of the proposition; and I will consider—

I. The nature of that enemy that shall be destroyed; and why he is called "the last enemy."

* From the notes of the Rev. S. Hillyard.

II. The manner and the successive stages in which our Lord Jesus has already conquered in part, and will completely conquer, this last enemy.

I. The nature of that enemy that shall be destroyed, and why he is called "the *last* enemy."

It is not necessary to say much to show that death is, in *many* respects, an enemy to the sons of Adam. It is so, first, if we consider it in its most obvious effects—the dissolution of the human frame. Every part of the body is part of a marvellous fabric, of a wonderful machine; which bears upon it the mark of Divine wisdom and skill in its contrivance and execution. It is a work which man is not only unable to form or contrive, but the contrivance of which he is not able to comprehend. Every man possesses and carries in himself certain excellences of composition, and enjoys the benefit of innumerable operations, while he is wholly unacquainted with the internal machinery by which they are produced. If we look upon the Goths and Vandals as the enemies of the nations, and of all civilized society, because they destroyed palaces and temples, and the ancient monuments of art, what must we think of death, which demolishes, not only in one victim, but in innumerable victims, the noblest fabric that was ever raised on earth, and spoils the most skilful works that were ever constructed? All human beauty, and vigour, and strength are at once laid prostrate by the power of death; are broken and shivered to pieces under the stroke of this great tyrant. Were we to see at once all the victims which, in different lands and climes, and in all ages, have fallen before him, we should behold a pile of ruins raised to the heavens: but these ruins are mostly crumbled to dust, and concealed in the darkness of the grave; or what an amazing view would be afforded of the power and conquests of this universal enemy!

Again, Death is an enemy as he puts an end to all that is terrestrial with regard to man. All the schemes, and projects, and thoughts that relate only to the concerns of time, are destroyed. "In that day," says the Word of God, "his thoughts perish:" all the thoughts of the sublimest genius of the most acute philosophers, of the subtlest statesmen, of the most ambitious projectors, perish! All find, at once, a termination to their intellectual labours, their sublunary joys and sorrows, hopes and fears: they go only as far as death leaves space for them; and stop where he opposes his power. As much, therefore, as the world is worth,—as much as it possesses of value in the eyes of man,—so much is death to be considered as a formidable foe, standing forth against him, and in opposition to his career.

Say, ye ambitious, ye lovers of wealth, ye pursuers of earthly pleasure, what will all the objects you desire avail you when you are summoned to meet this last enemy, and are by him confined to the narrow limits of the grave? What will you do in that period when your "souls shall be required of you," and you are questioned, "Whose shall these things be?" As much as you value these, so much will death be your enemy.

Death is also an enemy because of the separation of the tenderest

ties of nature and affection; of all those endearments of friendship and relationship that bind man to man. Death tears asunder brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, parents and children; he snatches the tender infant from the mother's breast, or bereaves it of parental care, and leaves it a helpless orphan in this wilderness. One part of the moral compound is left by him to mourn and sigh, while the other part is mingled with corruption, and becomes a companion of worms. Death so mars the features, that the most passionate admirers of the fairest and most lovely forms of beauty are constrained to say, as Abraham said of Sarah, "Bury my dead out of my sight." All the fruits of friendship are withered by his breath; and one has been called alone, to go through the dark passage where no one could accompany him: while the survivor, who is left behind, frequently experiences the greatest sufferings from the emotions and reflections of his mind. Alas! how many fond mothers, beloved children, and valuable friends have been already sacrificed to this inexorable tyrant! Nor is there any union so closely formed, nor any friendship so established and strengthened, but it will be cut asunder and destroyed by the stroke of this great enemy, death.

But the most terrible part yet remains,—the moral, or rather the eternal consequences of death. If Divine grace had not interposed, death has a sting by which he would pierce every transgressor, and send him to a state of interminable misery. "The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law."* The death of the body is by no means the full infliction of the penalty of the divine law. What we look upon as death is only a dark passage which conducts the sinner to the state of eternal death. The dissolution of our body, and the separation of the spirit from it, is but a preparation; like knocking off the chains and fetters from a prisoner who is about to be led forth to the place of execution. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life."† Eternal life is here contrasted with death: but what is the opposite of eternal life but eternal death—the death of the soul, which consists of the perpetual loss of hope; a cutting off from the presence and favour of God; a sense of his eternal wrath, which burns like devouring fire? The second death treads in the footsteps of the first, and its shadow covers it; it is the infliction of the sentence of the Eternal Governor of the universe; and the fear of it makes those who are aware they are sinners willing to struggle with a load of cares and sorrows, rather than fall into the hand of the living God: for it is a fearful thing,—"a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."‡

There are many properties of this enemy which give him the pre-eminence of terror. He is an inexorable enemy. Others may be bribed by riches, soothed by flatteries, moved by the tears and sorrows of a suppliant, or reconciled by a mediator; a daysman may interpose; one may come between us and our enemy, who may interpose to ward off or suspend the blow: but none can "give a ransom for his brother," to redeem his soul from death;§ "there is no discharge

* 1 Cor. xv. 56. † Rom. vi. 23. ‡ Heb. x. 31. § Psalm xlix. 7.

in that war:"* the redemption of the soul ceaseth "for ever;" there is no price that can be offered, or would be accepted. All the riches of the universe would be despised, if they were offered for only an hour's deliverance from the power of death: he wants the man himself, not what he possesses. Death will tear away the most ambitious from the heights of all his power, the wealthy from the midst of all his stores, and the voluptuous from the scene of all his pleasures. His ear is insensible to the groans of the child, and his eye is unmoved by the tears of the mother; he is not to be arrested or turned aside by the wailings of innocence, or by the outcries of guilt. All are levelled by the same undistinguishing stroke, and there is no possibility of release.

Death is an impartial enemy. Other enemies have particular grounds of quarrel; they do not oppose the whole of the species, but some individual, or a number of persons from whom they have received, or suppose they have received, an injury: but every one of the human race is the object of his enmity; his arrows will level all in the dust; "for it is appointed for *all* men once to die;"† and the grave is the "house of *all* the living." The strongest know that all their strength must fail: amid all their dissipation, their hurry and care, their jollity and mirth, they know, that in the path along which they hasten on there is one that will meet and destroy them; and they begin to look forward with anxiety and dismay in proportion as they approach the seat of this terrible majesty.

Like other great monarchs, he also has harbingers to proclaim and prepare for his approach. He sends before him the most agonizing pains and afflictions; diseases that consume our strength and vigour, and sometimes induce us to expect his arrival every moment. By the trembling joints, the dimness of the eyes, the changed countenance, the breaking of the "bowl at the cistern," and the loosing of the "silver cord," we know that he is near at hand. There is a shadow of death cast before him, extending according to the height of this terrible majesty, and stretching over part of the vale of life: yes, all that precedes our dissolution, all that is preparatory to the last stroke, are harbingers of death; afflictive in themselves, and to be dreaded on their own account, but peculiarly fearful as the precursors of this great adversary.

As these are his forerunners, so he has innumerable and dreadful instruments to destroy. The famine and the pestilence are in his hand; he kindles the fury of the battle, and riots in the field of slaughter; he wings the forked lightning, and expands the jaws of the devouring earthquake. The air we breathe, the elements by which we are supplied, and the food upon which we subsist are often converted into the instruments of death: he levies a contribution upon all; and extracts the poison of mortality from that which is given for the sustenance of life.

Death is called, not only an enemy, but the "last enemy." This is introduced principally to denote the completeness of the Redeemer's conquest: nothing remains after the last.

* Eccles. viii. 8. † Heb. ix. 27.

This is the last enemy of the church of God in its collective capacity. Persecution shall cease, affliction be removed, fears and terrors of conscience quelled, temptations overcome, and Satan subdued: still the triumphs of death will remain; a large portion of what the Lord has redeemed will remain under his dominion; the bodies of believers will continue in the grave till the final consummation of all things. Though Jesus Christ extends his sceptre over all nations, and all kingdoms become the kingdoms of God and his Christ,—though millions of the faithful shall reign with him, and rejoice over every other enemy, and hope to rejoice over this,—yet the vestiges of his conquests shall remain legible in the graves of the saints, and on the tombs and monuments of the just.

Death is also the last enemy of every believer. The Christian obtains hope of pardon; he goes on conquering one temptation after another, "from strength to strength," from victory to victory; but he knows that, after all, his body must come under the power of this enemy, and remain for a season in his dark domain. "I have," says he, "been carried through many trials: I have surmounted many difficulties; I have triumphed over many powerful temptations; but the dying part still remains: I have still a scene to pass through, in which I must be left alone; no friendly hand to guide or support me. I must engage, singly, with an enemy whom all men dread, and whose power no *man* comprehends, for it is invisible. He smites with an unseen hand; and, though millions have passed through the conflict, not one has returned to tell the secrets of his power and to unveil his territory; which, after so many ages, remains, as to us, 'a land of darkness, as darkness itself.'" Though the Christian does not sink into despair as he meets the last enemy and the hour of contest approaches, yet he frequently trembles; for he knows not what may occur before that triumph is afforded which puts the seal of perpetuity to all the other triumphs of his soul.

To other men, what ought I to say of the last enemy? However long they have escaped his power, he will meet them at last; when they are giddy with intoxicating pleasures; or walking on the heights of boundless ambition; or are the slaves of an avarice rapacious as the grave: when they imagine they have nothing to fear, when "they have more than heart can wish, and their eyes stand out with fatness," they find an enemy coming upon them like an armed man; they find in death all that is terrible; they are forced to encounter the *last* enemy —an enemy that must be conquered, or they must be defeated and lost for ever and ever.

II. We are to consider the manner, and the successive stages, in which our Lord Jesus has already conquered in part, and will completely conquer, this last enemy. "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet."* Death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed.

Consider the degrees and stages by which Jesus Christ conquers death.

1. By his incarnation and passion he purchased a right, in behalf of the human race, to conquer death and to triumph over it. Power and right are two distinct things; and, among men, the former is frequently opposed to the latter. A man may have power to do what he has no right to do. Jesus Christ, as God, had power to put down death; but it was necessary, in order that it might be put down fitly and properly, that such an expiation should be made as would remove the guilt on account of which mankind were doomed to die. "It became him,"—there was a fitness, a congruity in it,—"it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."* Not perfect with respect to his moral character, but perfectly fitted for his work; sustaining, by his suffering, the penalty his people had incurred, and thus acquiring an indisputable right to conduct them through every scene of life and death to his kingdom and glory. Remember, the moral consequence of sin is death. It was impossible that this enemy should be put down unless some way could be found to expiate our offences, that the transgressors might be freed from the penalty which, being transferred, was sustained by a surety. It was Jesus Christ who, in consequence of uniting in his person the nature of God and man, interposed between man and God "to make an end of sins, and to bring in everlasting righteousness."† This he accomplished by his incarnation and suffering. His incarnation rendered him capable of suffering, and his Divinity stamped an infinite value upon the sufferings of his humanity. Thus, the weakness of his flesh united with the dignity of his Godhead to procure the ransom of mankind from their subjection to death. His Father "laid help upon him as one that is mighty," "he exalted one chosen out of the people:"‡ "this is his servant whom he upholds, his elect in whom his soul delighteth."§

This enemy, according to the established and eternal rules of the Divine government, could not be encountered and overcome but by one who was willing to yield, for a season, to his power. He that would conquer death for us must invade his territories, pass the threshold of his cavern, become an inhabitant or a sojourner in his domains: and to this Jesus submitted. By death "he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and delivered them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage."‖ Thus, by weakness, he became "mighty to save." His sufferings and death upon the cross laid those deep foundations on which the fabric of immortality is firmly built.

2. Jesus Christ, by his Spirit, gives the earnest and the pledge of victory over the last enemy: he takes away the power of sin, which is the sting of death, and he communicates the principle of life. Whoever is enabled, through the Spirit, to lay hold of Jesus Christ by faith, lays hold of him who is the "resurrection and the life." "Whosoever believeth in me shall never die."¶ Thus our Saviour

* Heb. ii. 10. † Dan. ix. 24. ‡ Psalm lxxxix. 19.
§ Isaiah xlii. 1. ‖ Heb. ii. 14, 15. ¶ John xi. 25, 26.

taught, to the confusion of the Jews: "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever."* Thus they shall never taste death; that bitter taste, which lies in the dread of its consequences, they shall not experience as those do who know not Christ, and have not his Spirit. They who flee into the arms of the Saviour, who appropriate the fruits of his death, become, thereby, living members of their living head; they have the "earnest of the purchased inheritance;" they enjoy peace with God, a holy superiority over their "last enemy;" and, as they advance to the contest, can triumphantly exclaim, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"† They know him to be a destroyer only of that which must be destroyed; and that even the body, though it moulder to dust, shall rise again. Their souls are also inlaid with blessed principles, so as to be prepared for a glorious immortality. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you;"‡ and by these influences they shall become meet subjects of eternal purity and happiness.

Thus Jesus Christ goes on reigning till every portion of the power of death is abolished. The penalty of death is conditionally abolished in favour of the whole, so that it is proclaimed throughout the world, that "whosoever believeth on the Son of God shall never perish, but have everlasting life."§ And there is an earnest of immortality in the believer: as Jesus Christ, our substitute, took possession of immortality, and "became the first-fruits of them that slept,"‖ so all his saints have in themselves an inward pledge, like that which Christ had on earth, an earnest of their alliance to eternal life.

3. When these preparatory measures have taken place, the empire of death shall be sapped to the foundation, and its power be utterly destroyed. This has been a widely extended empire, founded on, or spreading over, the ruins of all other empires: it has comprehended within its domains all the seed of Adam; it has continued from age to age. Compared with the length of its existence, the boasted eternal duration of the Roman city and empire is as nothing. But the final stroke will produce the entire overthrow of this wide and lasting dominion. The chapter from which the text is taken treats of this. He who first, by his death, gave us a right to this victory, He who, by giving the earnest of the Spirit, raised us to a holy superiority over

* John vi. 54–63. † 1 Cor. xv. 55. ‡ Rom. viii. 9–11.
§ John iii. 16 ‖ 1 Cor xv 20.

our enemy, will at last vanquish him by that almighty energy by which he is "able even to subdue all things unto himself."* He will then "fashion these vile bodies like unto his own glorious body;" he will stand forth as the pattern by which believers shall be formed. They that are earthy continue, like the first man, earthy; but believers, who once bore the image of the earthy, now bear the image of the heavenly. "The first man is of the earth," but "the second man is the Lord from heaven."† He has the capacity of everlasting existence; a well-spring of life from which life will be supplied to all his brethren. In the epistle to the Thessalonians, which is the first that was written by this apostle, he says, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For, if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word o the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the arch angel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first."‡ He does not mean to teach us here that they shall rise before the wicked, however true that may be; but that they shall rise before those who are alive shall be changed: "then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord."§ The first effect of Divine power will be to raise the dead in a moment, to call forth those that sleep in the dust, to make "the sea give up the dead that are in it;" to loosen the tombs and open the sepulchres that have been closed for ages over the dust of the saints: *then* "they which are alive shall be changed." He recurs to the same subject in this chapter: "Behold," says he, "I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."‖ The last trump, which shall give notice of the change of those that are alive, is here distinguished from the former trumpet, at the sounding of which the dead shall be raised. Thus the Saviour, by one voice, uttered with greater majesty than when he said, "Lazarus, come forth," will raise the dead; and by a second he will change the living; so that all will be prepared to be "caught up to meet the Lord in the air."

Thus the empire of death, which has suffered a slow decay, which it has required so many ages to overthrow, which has seemed to recover from its defeats, will at last sink by one powerful stroke, never to rise again. It will not require more than a moment of time to raise all the dead, to lay open every sepulchre, to restore every particle of dust, that is fit to be restored, to its proper body, and for all the bodies of the saints to be prepared for the mansion of eternal glory.

* Phil. iii. 21. † 1 Cor. xv. 47. ‡ 1 Thess. iv. 13-18.
§ 1 Thess. iv 17 ‖ 1 Cor xv 51-53.

How insipid and tame are the histories of all other conquests,—of the rise and fall of all other kingdoms and empires,—when compared with the grand and wonderful achievements of the "King Immortal," and the fall of death beneath his power, and the giving up of all his prey; when every victim from earth and sea, though under monuments of marble, nay, rocks of adamant, shall be restored; when he shall bring forth every particular form to be repossessed by its proper spirit, from which it has been for a season divorced! Thus will he "swallow up death in victory," and then clothe his redeemed with garments of immortality. Death shall be known and feared no more. Millions of millions shall join in everlasting praises to him whom all the redeemed will acknowledge as their great Deliverer.

My dear brethren, what is the proper improvement of this subject? To raise our eyes in adoration and gratitude to the blessed Saviour, who will fulfil the threatening, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction."* "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." "We shall be more than conquerors, through him that loved us."† Lift up your eyes, ye saints, in love and praise to the glorious Redeemer. He hath reconciled you by his blood; defeated your spiritual enemies, and raised in you hopes of immortality. What remains for you is infinitely greater than what you possess. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."‡ What is the proper frame of spirit for you to possess? To have your conversation in heaven, to be "looking for, and hasting to, the coming of the Son of God."

How great, my brethren, are the privileges you enjoy! Have you any need to scramble for the perishing riches of this world? Will you "load yourselves with thick clay?" Will you fret and repine if you are disappointed in your expectation of worldly good, or if you are deprived of what you once enjoyed? Will you forget "the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation?" The pledge is granted to you now. Your Elder Brother, at the right-hand of the throne, has taken possession for you. Will you corrupt yourselves with "lusts of the flesh, and of the eye, and with the pride of life," while you have heaven open to your view, and the promise of eternal life laid before you? It doth not indeed "appear" at present "what you shall be;" there is not room enough on earth for the display of such glory: the glory of the eternal world must come down, before we can fully know what "God hath prepared for them that love him." Your glory would be too great to be sustained by flesh and blood; these cannot enter into the kingdom but at the redemption of the body. Then shall be the "manifestation of the sons of God:" the meanest Christian will appear as a glorious temple of the Holy Ghost; every saint will arise and shine as the sun in the

* Hosea xiii. 14. † Rom. viii. 37. ‡ 1 John iii. 2.

kingdom of his heavenly Father. At his powerful voice, that penetrates the grave and agitates the dust, all shall shine forth with a lustre which will extinguish all sublunary glory.

How, also, ought these considerations to elevate believers above the sorrows and afflictions of time! The apostle, when speaking of the same solemn event, in the passage from the Thessalonians which I have already quoted, adds, "Wherefore, comfort one another with these words." This indeed is substantial comfort; this is the balm of every wound; this supports us under the stroke that bereaves us of our dearest friends and relatives. Those who have followed the remains of Christians to the grave have, amid their sorrows, nourished heavenly hope, and enjoyed consolation sufficient to make them almost the objects of envy.

And this enemy is the "last enemy:" when *he* is destroyed, the field will be quite clear; the vast field of eternity will be free from every molestation. The mind may travel on as far as imagination can extend, and nothing will arise to discourage. This is the "last enemy:" nothing more to be feared; all sin shall be absolved, the powers of darkness banished, evil inclinations eradicated, and the world destroyed. When death is vanquished, all his precursors, appendages, and consequences shall fall with him; nothing remains but salvation, glory, and eternal life,—an everlasting monument to the honour of the mighty Conqueror of death. Well may he be styled the "King of kings," and the "Lord of lords:" worthy was he to receive a name, a "new name," exalted "above every other name," "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess"* him to be Lord of all! Never was there another being, much less a being in our nature, who ever thought of gaining such a victory, ever thought of lifting up a weapon, or aiming a stroke, in such a conflict. But Jesus has "led captivity captive;"† he has swallowed up death in victory.

I speak to dying men, and cannot conclude without addressing a word to those who have no acquaintance with Christ, no vital union with him, no comfort in his promises. You may have surmounted many difficulties, been conducted through scenes of trial, gained some advantage over certain enemies, obtained great prosperity in the world, and be ready to say, "Soul, take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for many years;" but recollect, there is another enemy yet to contend with; a dreadful battle remains to be fought, and by no power of your own can you overcome. There is an adversary at the *end* of your path: he adds to the tyranny all the caprice which is common to arbitrary powers; he delights to strike into the dust those who are most exalted; he loves to shoot his arrows at a shining mark, and suddenly to fall upon those who are least apprehensive.

Whether you are aware of this enemy or not, whether you foresee his approach or not, he will meet you, and engage you in a greater conflict than you have ever yet sustained. You must conquer, or be

* Phil. ii. 9-11. † Eph. iv. 8.

defeated and lost for ever. But you have no power to overcome, to appease, to deceive, to turn away, or to escape from this strong adversary. There is, however, a proclamation proceeding from the Saviour, in the gospel: "I am the resurrection, and the life: whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."* "The hour is coming when they that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth."† "Them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."‡ "Wherefore, blessed are the dead that die in the Lord:" their spirits repose in his bosom; even their dust is precious in his sight, and he watches over it till he shall fashion it anew; and in body and spirit they shall be heirs of immortality and partakers of his glory for ever and ever.

What then remains for my dying hearers? Some of you will, perhaps, never hear another sermon; all are liable soon and suddenly to fall; none of you can escape, none can find comfort but in the Saviour and in his gospel. What then remains? What is your wisdom? What does sound common sense dictate, but that you should make an immediate application to the Saviour, and place an entire confidence in him; that you should pray for his Spirit, and seek its constant guidance? Let me entreat you that are young to consider that your covenant with death will soon be at an end. Youth is often the victim of this enemy; and he, whom they think will come late, because he is the last enemy on earth, frequently levels those to the dust who bid fair to flourish for years to come.

Some of you have advanced far in the path of life; gray hairs are here and there upon you: others observe your approach to the cave of the last enemy; the feebleness of your voice, the wrinkles on your forehead, the decay of your vigour, forebode your last conflict, while you are buried amid the cares of life, and think nothing of death. "This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation," that men so near to eternity will not look to the Saviour, nor direct a single thought to heaven, nor offer up one prayer to secure the immortal crown.

Prepare for death! You cannot be prepared but by repentance and faith. "This is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent:"§ not to hear of Christ, or speak of him, or profess him; but to *know* him; to have fellowship with him; to have an interest in him; to receive him as your friend, while you submit to his sceptre. If you have not yet submitted to the Saviour, when you come to the end of life, what can you carry with you? What can you retain, but an immortal nature, a conscience of right and wrong, and therefore of your own deserts?—an awful responsibility!

"After death is the judgment." What is to shield you in judgment from the stroke of vengeance? Have you been hearing the calls of the gospel without regarding them? Have you not applied the truth to yourselves? O, retreat now from the snares of the world; shut your eyes upon the scenes of time, on which they must soon be closed for ever. Converse with the world to come; endeavour to yield to

* John xi. 25, 26.
† John v. 28, 29.
‡ 1 Thess. iv 14.
§ John xvii. 3.

the power of it; look at "the things which are not seen;" walk, as it were, upon the borders of the ocean of eternity, and listen to the sound of its waters till you are deaf to every sound besides.

The blessed Saviour, who, when he was upon earth, raised the dead and healed all manner of diseases, is able to heal your spiritual maladies, and to raise you from the dead. He is exalted for this purpose: the "river of life" flows from his side; he invites you to partake of it; "the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely."* In the blessed Saviour are all the springs of pardon, grace, and everlasting consolation: he will guide you through every scene, give you victory over death, admit you through the gates into the city, and there he will "wipe away all tears from your eyes;"† he will dwell with you, and you with him; and you shall be "kings and priests unto God" for ever.

When you meet with the next suggestion to infidelity, the next temptation to sin, ask whether those who tempt you can confute the declarations of Jesus; whether they can give such evidence of the falsehood, as he gives of the truth, of his sayings; whether they can offer any thing that is worthy of being put in competition with the blessings he promises; whether all the world affords,—even if it could be prolonged to eternity, which cannot be,—would be equal to the blessings of eternal and heavenly glory? If not, turn from them; spurn them away; "lay hold on eternal life," and say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

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## X.

## THE SUCCESS OF MISSIONS DEPENDS UPON THE AGENCY OF THE SPIRIT.‡

ISA. xxxii. 13–15.—*Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city: because the palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall be left; the forts and towers shall be dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks; until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.*

[PREACHED AT THE BAPTIST MISSIONARY MEETING AT CAMBRIDGE, OCTOBER 6, 1819.]

THIS chapter contains a very evident prophecy of the appearance and the kingdom of Christ, as you perceive by referring to the first

* Rev. xxii. 17. † Rev. xxi. 4.

‡ Printed from the notes of W. B. Gurney, Esq., collated and blended with those of the Rev. S Hillyard.

part of it. Contrary to what might be expected, the prophet turns aside; and, instead of finishing the painting of that beautiful scene of things which might be anticipated as the effect of this appearance, he proceeds to paint a scene of great desolation, of great barrenness, in the words which have now been read to you. Agreeably to this, the actual effect of our Saviour's manifestation, with respect to the people to whom he more immediately came, was by no means such as might be expected. After gathering a few out of that nation, and thus planting the first Christian church, God retired from them on account of their impenitence and unbelief; and the land is still abandoned to that desolation and barrenness which is here represented.

Under these figures we are probably principally called to notice the spiritual barrenness, the spiritual blindness, hardness, and impenitence of heart which have befallen that unhappy people, and under which they at present labour. It is said, in the words now read, that this unhappy state will continue to a certain point of time, or rather till the arrival of a certain important event: that event is predicted in the last verse. If it were asked the prophet, How long shall this state of desolation last? he answers, "until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest." Thus the prophet teaches us, that the desolations will not come to an end, until, in consequence of great changes, and the improvement of the moral condition of men, there shall arise a state of prosperity by which the wilderness shall be a fruitful field, and that which is now so esteemed shall be counted in comparison a forest.

Though the immediate bearing of these words is, in all probability, upon the state and prospects of the Jewish people; yet, by parity of reasoning, it may be extended much farther, and may be considered as assigning the reason why the nations of the earth continue in so wretched a state, with respect to things spiritual and divine, as that which they now exhibit: and they may be considered as directing our expectations, and regulating our confidence, respecting the final termination of this state of things; teaching that it will come to an end,—that a great and beneficial change will take place, but not till the Spirit be poured out from on high. Then, and not till then, will "the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest."

Considered in this light, these words bear a very close relation to he subject of our present meeting, and tend to regulate our views and expectations respecting the success of that great work, with a view to the promotion of which we are at this time assembled in the presence of the Almighty; and may allay that dissatisfaction and discontent, so far as it borders on repining, which the comparatively small success attending the proclamation of the gospel in the present times might excite; while it serves to strengthen our faith in the promise of that Being, who, as he has afforded this hope, is abundantly able to accomplish it by that mighty power by which he will "subdue all things unto himself."

The great and momentous truth taught in this passage, you perceive, my brethren, is, that the ultimate success of missions,—of the proclamation of the gospel, in short, in every form,—depends upon the communication of the Spirit; and that its perfect success can be effected only in consequence of that Spirit being "poured down from on high." It is this momentous truth, and the proper improvement of it, to which on the present occasion I shall request your serious attention.

That the Spirit of God is afforded at present to the church is evident from its existence; for, since the church is entirely a spiritual structure, raised and preserved by that Divine Spirit, if it had been utterly withdrawn, it would have been annihilated. Every member of that church is the production of the Spirit, quickened by the Spirit, and moulded to accord with the foundation-stone upon which, by faith, it is built. We cannot, therefore, for a moment contemplate the total withdrawment of the Spirit of God, either as an event that has taken place since the first proclamation of Christianity, or as one that is to be apprehended. We witness many pleasing instances, in our congregations and churches, of Divine communications to the mind,—of hearts opened to "receive the truth in the love of it," and brought into willing captivity to Christ; instances as clearly verified as those we read of in the New Testament. But still, though the Spirit of God is not utterly withdrawn, that time has not arrived which is here announced; the Spirit is not "poured from on high" in that plenitude and variety of gifts which may be reasonably expected. A few drops of this sacred influence descend here and there; but it by no means descends in so copious a shower, nor so widely diffuses that spiritual fertility which the Scriptures give us reason to anticipate; it is not "poured from on high."

That the success, the ultimate and full success of missions depends upon the outpourings of the Spirit of God appears to be manifest from the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. This involves a doctrine so familiar to your apprehensions who are acquainted with "the truth as it is in Jesus," that it would be needless to accumulate all the proofs the Scripture would supply; a few passages only are necessary. Our text is one of this kind. In the prophecies of Isaiah you find frequent passages of Scripture which represent that the work of diffusing Christianity is to be throughout truly the work of God,—is to be distinguished as such by every serious spectator. Thus we are told that he will plant "in the wilderness the cedar-tree, the shittah-tree, and the myrtle, and the oil-tree; that he will set in the desert the fir-tree, and the pine, and the box-tree together; that they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it;" plainly implying that the bringing in of the heathen nations, as well as the conversion of the Jews, is so much the work of God, that it will be made conspicuous to all true believers.

When the conversion of the Jews, which must be supposed to be effected by the same sort of agency, is announced by the prophet

Zechariah, it is in these words: "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon, in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart." The prophet Zechariah, in order to encourage Zerubbabel in the building of the temple,—where an eminent type is presented of the Messiah, the great Restorer of the temple of God, who is announced under the appellation of the True Branch,—says, it is "not by power, nor by might, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

The passage in Joel, when cited by St. Peter* on the day of Pentecost, he refers to the events of that day: and though this may seem to break in upon our doctrine, yet, when truly considered, it confirms it; for we are not to consider this as fulfilled merely at one period, but at different stages; as verified at different eras, and as pointing out a steady series of operations of the Divine Being, effected by the same sort of agency, and for the same purpose, at different periods of the gospel dispensation, all comprehended under the general term "*the last days.*" If mere human agency would avail, no reason can be assigned why it should not have been sufficient, at that time, for the conversion of the Jews; as well as for the conversion of the gentiles at present. But we know that the conversion of the Jews was the effect of the miraculous effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost; and we have reason to suppose there will be a like effusion before the consummation of all things; one which will realize more fully the prediction of the prophet Joel: for he does not change one man by one means, and another by one that is totally different; and one nation by one kind of agency, and another by another; but the mode in which he proceeds, and the nature of the materials employed, are, with regard to Him, just as uniform as the nature of the work to be accomplished. Wherever the diffusion of the gospel is presented to us in the Old Testament, in a course of prophetic annunciation, the hand of God is always the object to which it is referred: it is perpetually claimed as his work; and the most magnificent expressions are used to represent this work in distinction from any other. The prophet Jeremiah declares that a new covenant shall be made, distinct from that made with their forefathers, by which God will undertake to put his "law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; that he will be their God, and that they shall be his people." Who can possibly suppose this can intend any thing else but the real agency of the Spirit of God? For by what words can that be more aptly repre-

* Acts ii. 17.

sented than by the Divine Spirit who wrote with his own finger, on the stony tables, the words of the law, and who will inscribe his precepts on "the fleshly tables of the heart?" When the Divine Being informs the Jews, that, after a long series of desolations and judgments, he shall bring to a close their captivities, painting it in very delightful colours, he says, "And I will no more hide my face from them; for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God."*

In the New Testament, we learn that the great Captain of our salvation did not encounter the powers of darkness, or enter upon his work, till he was anointed by the Spirit of God: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor: he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and renewing of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bound, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." He, though a personage of such a divine and extraordinary character, yet, considered as an instrument in this work (with reverence be it spoken), was not qualified for it till the Spirit had descended upon him; and when he went into the wilderness he was filled with the Spirit. His apostles also were made fit for their work by the effusion of the Spirit from on high, on the day of Pentecost: till that time they were not qualified for their work in the nations to which they were to be sent. And though I am aware it may be said, this respects the conferring miraculous gifts, yet, be it recollected, that we find as great a change in the moral state of the disciples: from being ignorant, secular, and pusillanimous, they were brought into a most blessed frame of mind; they were truly enlightened, and transformed at once into heroes of zeal and piety. There appeared as great a change in their affections and hearts: they were as much purified and refined from their former selves as they were distinguished by the possession of miraculous gifts.

Wherever the apostles had any distinguished success in the ministry of the gospel, they certainly remind us of its being effected by a Divine agency. If they preached with success at Antioch, where it appears that their ministry was attended with great benefit, it is announced in these words: "And the hand of the Lord was with them." When Paul had preached the gospel to the heathen, after having been committed with Barnabas to the work of the Lord to which they were sent, they represented to the church "how God had opened a way to the gentiles:" and the Jewish Christians were compelled, we are told, to magnify the grace of God in communicating this blessing to them; and they did it in these words: "Then hath God also to the gentiles granted repentance unto life." If Lydia was converted to the faith of Christ, we are told it was because "the Lord had opened her heart to attend to the things that were spoken." How clear and decided, again, is the language of Paul, when speaking on this subject!—"Who, then, is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos

* Ezek. xxxix. 29.

watered, but God gave the increase: so then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." Sincere preachers of the gospel, then, as far as they have been successful in the work, even from the very beginning, from the first communication of Divine truth, have uniformly represented it as the work of God, as the work of his Spirit, independent of the instrumentality which he employed in the ministry of the Word: those instruments themselves considered it as the work of God to confer success on their labours by the power of his Spirit. It is evident, from the nature of the thing, that it must be so; for, considering the state of man, it is impossible to suppose that any thing less than a Divine power can change the heart. If the state of man be a state of trespasses and sins,—if "the carnal mind be enmity against God,"—how is it possible that from such elements as these can spring pure and ardent love to the Divine Being, but in consequence of a Divine power? "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Were it the design of God merely to build on a foundation already laid, or to repair a dilapidated edifice, one might talk of the efficacy of human suasion; but when that which is to be done is to create a new principle, to pour new life into the soul, to give "a new heart," to plant new seeds in a soil where all has been barrenness and desolation, to turn the waters into new channels, to effect a total change of heart and character,—what can accomplish all this but an almighty power? Hence the Scriptures represent it as a creation of new organs; giving eyes to see and ears to hear, that we may see, and hear, and understand, and feel as we never did before. It is represented as quickening the dead, and this "according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ Jesus when he raised him from the dead." Thus "we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Faith is the great principle of this change, and *it* is "the gift of God," and is of grace; for, "by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." "To you," says the same apostle, "it is *given*, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." What is more manifest than that this language implies that believing is always the effect of Divine grace? We allow, indeed, most cheerfully and thankfully, that the gospel is the instrument of God, and wonderfully fitted by him for his work: but even *it* is nothing more than an instrument; and when it is successful, and baffles every human effort exerted against it, it is because it is wielded by an omnipotent arm. The gospel of God, when directed by the wisdom of God, and urged by his energy, none can withstand.

Human suasion can operate only on principles which already exist. When Demosthenes, by his powerful eloquence, excited the Athenians to combat, he only called into action, by a skilful grouping of motives, and an appropriate exercise of his genius, principles already existing, but which had lain dormant. He created nothing new; he transformed them not into new creatures; but only roused and stimulated those principles which had animated the bosoms of nations in resisting tyranny in every age. But when the apostles went forth to preach

faith in Christ, they enforced and demanded, if I may so say, a state of things of which there had been no instance: they proposed to make a change in the mind and heart of man to which there was no natural tendency; they required a creature "dead in trespasses and sins" to awake to Christ; they proposed to convert him into a devoted servant, a subject most loyal, most affectionate, and ardent: and how was it possible that any mere human art or force could effect such changes as these?

It is worthy of observation, that those who have had the greatest success in preaching the gospel in heathen nations, as well as in Christian lands, have ever been the most deeply convinced of this important truth; a truth they enforced in every stage of the progress of the gospel, and which, instead of producing discouragement, only awakened greater ardour: their strength appeared only to lie in an implicit confidence in Him whose energy is all-sufficient, and who has so fully declared his willingness to exert it. Thus, Brainerd, and Schwartz, and Eliot, and those in every age who have had the greatest success in turning men to righteousness, have been the first to declare that they were nothing. They, of all men, most ardently implored, and most entirely depended upon, the agency we are now contemplating; and their success appears to have been more in proportion to their earnest solicitude in seeking this blessing, this Divine agency, than to any other cause whatsoever. Now, if we see men accomplish a great and extraordinary work, and those who are most successful in it ascribing their success to a particular cause, would it not be presumption in us, who know nothing of the matter, to doubt their testimony? If success were to be considered a test as to the manner in which the effect has been produced, in what other instances are persons who are mere spectators, who have taken no care to collect information on the subject, held to be better judges than those who have "borne the burden and heat of the day," and have had, in proportion to their success, the deepest consciousness that they were nothing,—that they merely "planted and watered, but that it was God who gave the increase?"

Those who do not believe there is any agency of the Spirit of God, are so conscious that nothing else can produce the desired effect, that they do not venture into the field; but, while they despair of the conversion of men, deal out scorn upon such as are engaged in the work. They are chiefly those who either dispute against, or practically trifle with, the agency of the Spirit; who are conscious they have no adequate power; and yet, while they feel this, pity, or affect to pity, the persons who depend on resources with which they are unacquainted, and whose value, therefore, they are unable to estimate. This is a plain matter of fact.

There is a class of professed Christians in this country (I would not use any invidious terms) who formally deny the great doctrine of the influence of the Spirit; and with regard to that denomination generally, containing many men of great talents and high respectability, what has been their conduct—what the sentiments they have evinced? A complete hopelessness of the least success, and a corresponding

inactivity in calling on the idolater to abandon his idols, and wait for the Son of God from heaven. Look at those classes of Christians who are disposed to feel the greatest distrust of the conversion of the heathen. Is not that distrust founded on a real disbelief of the agency of the Spirit? Hence they satisfy themselves with cavilling at the supposed insufficiency of the instruments employed, on the supposition that those persons are the agents; while they themselves feel that they are no more than the pencil by which the Lord engraved the precepts on "the tables of stone," and that they are that by which the Spirit of God writes it "upon the fleshly tables of the heart." Look, on the other hand, at the history of those who have been the most successful missionaries to the heathen, and see whether you cannot trace certain results for which you cannot account on any other hypothesis than that most momentous one of a Divine influence, at certain periods, accompanying their labours. In the history of Brainerd and Eliot, and others, you perceive that for a considerable time there seem to have been the same efforts employed, the same doctrines taught, the same earnest and zealous prayers, and the same watchfulness over their own hearts, and yet no saving effect produced on others: all still remained barren; no desirable movement of the heart was excited; and this continued for a long period. Such was the state of things when Brainerd first undertook the mission to the Indians; but, after a considerable time, while he was propounding only the same doctrines, and using only the same means, the Spirit of God appeared to put forth its energy, and Divine communication was imparted; at one season "like a rushing, mighty wind," at others "like the dew and rain from heaven," softening, and thus opening the heart which had resisted the entrance of sacred truth, and causing the tear of genuine penitence to steal down the cheek. Nobody could doubt that there was some one greater than a missionary there,—that the Spirit of God had changed the barren soil to sacred ground, and had wetted it, "like Gideon's fleece, with the dews from heaven." And so it is, my brethren, that every person who has had any long acquaintance with the Christian ministry is aware that there are certain periods of barrenness, and certain periods for bearing fruit. The same talents, whether great or small, may be brought into action; but there shall be some seasons in which no good shall be done, and others in which similar efforts shall be crowned with extraordinary success.

There are two reasons why we are in danger, even if we believe this doctrine, of losing sight of its true bearing and importance.

In the first place, one reason why it is difficult to depend, as we ought, on the agency of the Spirit, and yet continue active, is, that it is not matter of consultation, and that it cannot immediately and directly enter into the regulation of the choice of expedients, or the adoption of measures. It is altogether an affair, a secret, of the Divine Being: it cannot in any degree be subjected to our control, and therefore it cannot be the subject of our counsel. We are called upon to exert ourselves as much in the same way, to employ the same sort of instrumentality, to set on foot the same means, as though there were no such

doctrine existing in our creed, and no such expectation existing in our minds. The consequence is, we are very apt to lose sight, even while strenuously attending to our duty, in some measure, of that mysterious and Divine agency on which the success of all our efforts must depend. The most busy husbandman is not always the one who sees most clearly his dependence on the sun or the rain: and while good men may be exerting their utmost prudence, and their utmost zeal for the diffusion of Christianity among the heathen, they are in great danger of losing sight of their dependence on the invisible agency of the Divine Spirit, in directing their attention exclusively to the apparatus they are setting in motion.

Another reason probably is, that this is an invisible power; whereas our own actions and plans are objects of distinct observation. The energy of the Divine Spirit is to be seen only in its effects. It is a mysterious, hidden agency; whereas the plans we form furnish objects of sensation and observation: and such is the miserable littleness of the human mind, after all, that we are more struck with "sparks of our own kindling," than with the light of heaven; more occupied in looking at the instrumentality, than in impressing upon our minds the mysterious and potent energy, of the Almighty. It is one thing to *believe* that there is an agency of the Spirit, and gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, to render Christianity beneficial to men; and quite another thing to have *a deep and practical persuasion* of it, and to regulate all our feelings and expectations on the momentous subject of converting the world, by a continual reference to this most interesting truth.

Here, then, permit me, for a few moments, to point out what appears to be the proper practical improvement of the truth, that the success of missions depends on the agency of the Divine Spirit. If this be a fact, my brethren, it necessarily teaches us our entire dependence on God, and, consequently, it ought to engage us to attempt the work of evangelizing the heathen, with the greatest humility, and the most profound annihilation of self; with a perfect renunciation of our own strength and of our own resources. These are absolute prerequisites to a true dependence on God. While we use our own resources, we must, in a measure, distrust them, and pray to God that we may use them aright. We can do nothing towards putting in motion the only agency from which any permanent result of the right kind can flow. I say, nothing, absolutely nothing: and yet we must exert our instrumentality; for mere instruments are nothing apart from the Divine agency included in the promise. Separate from the hand which wields us,—from the volition of the Divine Being,—and from the agency of that Spirit which is included in this promise,—we are, I repeat it, absolutely nothing. Any false confidence, therefore, such as suggests itself probably to men who have been teachers of other sciences,—any of that elation of mind, or confidence in our own strength, which has given, perhaps, nerve and elevation to human courage,—is out of place here. The apostle was the greatest of all men in this matter: but how was he affected? He tells the Corinthians that he was with

them "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling;" his work was watered with tears and with prayers; he felt himself a worm in the presence of the great Agent: and hence it was that he was enabled to "thrash mountains." There was always in his mind a deep sentiment of humility, and a powerful conviction of the presence of the Divine Being.

The rain is not more necessary to raise the seed, the sun is not more necessary to bring it to maturity, than this work of the Spirit. Hence, I would observe, prayer appears to be of the utmost importance in connexion with every attempt for the conversion of the heathen nations. Prayer appears, indeed, to be the appropriate duty of such as desire their conversion: prayer in the closet; prayer on those seasons on which they are consulting as to their plans of operation. It was while the church at Antioch were waiting on the Lord, and fasting, that the Holy Ghost said, "Separate to me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." It was by prayer they were commended to the work for which they were designed. If the Spirit descended on the day of Pentecost, it was when they were "all with one accord in one place." It appears that, in every period of the world, prayer, a spirit of prayer for this great object, has been the precursor of real success. More than sixty years ago, as several of you are, I doubt not, aware, a union among real Christians for extraordinary prayer began to manifest itself. It first appeared in America, and was most warmly recommended by President Edwards: thence it was transferred to Scotland, by the instrumentality of the venerable Dr. Erskine; and from thence into England, by our valuable friend Dr. Ryland, at the commencement of the Baptist mission; and the excellent practice was soon adopted by pious men of other persuasions. Never is a mission more likely to prosper than when it is begun in the spirit of ardent prayer and supplication. And if ever this spirit departs from us, "the glory is departed" from this mission: if ever we cease to mingle the spirit of devotion with these services, we may succeed in outward means, we may multiply and extend them, but we shall never see the conversion of the heathen. Prayer touches the only spring that can possibly ensure success. By speaking we move man; but by prayer we move God. It is through the medium of prayer that the littleness and meanness of man prevail with Omnipotence. "The prayer of faith" is the only power in the universe to which the great Jehovah yields: he looks upon every other power as more or less opposed to him; but he looks upon this as a confession of man's dependence, as an appropriate homage to his greatness, as an attraction which brings down his divine agency to the earth.

Here every one may assist missions: and every tear in the closet, every pang in the heart over the miseries of those who are dead in their sins, every prayer lifted up in that retirement where no eye sees but the eye of Him "which seeth in secret," affords a most important benefit. These are the elements of success; these the pledges of final triumph. You know it has been customary for a considerable

time for a special season of prayer to be set apart in our society, and among Christians of other denominations, for the conversion of the heathen. On the fervour of these supplications, through the intercession of the great Mediator, will, I have no doubt, depend the final realization of our hopes in the conversion of the nations to the faith of Christ.

It necessarily results from the doctrine of the text, that we ought to be exceedingly careful not to "grieve the Spirit of God." He is the great Agent; and we must expect to succeed in proportion only as we shall gratify that Holy Spirit. You know the tempers which grieve that Spirit; you know that "all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envyings, and evil speaking, and bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour," are directly opposed to His nature,—that they are an element in which He never moves; but that meekness, and gentleness, and forgiveness of injuries, and love, and joy, and peace, and long-suffering, and goodness, and faith, and temperance,—that the lamb-like virtues of Jesus Christ are those in which He delights. You know the graces of the Spirit of God, which he imparted to Jesus Christ, are still the object of his predilection, and that he cannot dwell among us any further than he nourishes those dispositions in us; that He who first gave the Spirit still gives the same Spirit and no other Spirit; and we can expect no triumphant success of his gospel, or his kingdom, but in proportion as we are "anointed by the Spirit:" for, as "the oil ran down to the skirts of Aaron's garment," so his holy influences anoint the heart of every true disciple. Let us take care, then, that in the management of this mission there be nothing in our conduct or temper opposed to the simplicity and purity of the Christian dispensation. Let us take care, as individuals and as churches, that we walk in the fear of the Lord; and that we look thus to have the consolations of the Holy Ghost, to be edified and multiplied.

There does not appear to me to be a more important maxim than that contained in Luke xvii. 20,—"The kingdom of God cometh not with observation;" or, as Doctor Campbell renders it, "*is not ushered in with pomp and parade.*" If this mission is made the instrument of ostentation and gratification, or of amusing the public by a display of gaudy eloquence,—if it is conducted on such a plan as comports rather with the maxims of this world than with "the mind of Christ," —the usefulness of the society is in that measure destroyed. If it is conducted without prayer, which I am sorry to say has not always been sufficiently regarded, nothing can be more calculated to "grieve the Holy Spirit." My brethren, if we look at the manner in which those missions were first conducted which converted the whole world, we shall find that they were destitute of all human parade, and were conducted with extraordinary simplicity. It was while the church ministered and fasted that they were directed "to send forth Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto they had been called." There were no places sought out as places of theatrical resort: such things were not thought of at that time; nor *could* they be thought of by those who formed themselves solely upon the simplicity of the Scriptures.

It is not my wish to give offence to any persons by these remarks: but I could not discharge my conscience as a minister of Christ without making them; not at all with a view to censuring what has been done, or blaming any individual in the present place, but of lifting up my voice against certain dangers to which the corruption of our nature and the state of the world expose us.

All rivalry, also, between different societies for the purpose of promoting missions,—all that rivalry which has not for its object and design the promoting the cause, the knowledge, and the service of God,—is offensive in his sight. Let us guard against that vicious rivalry which shall induce the least disposition to depreciate or hide in silence the success of others; which shall lead us to look coolly on the most splendid acts of missionary labour, unless they emanate from ourselves, or bring honour to our party. All these dispositions, as far as they exist in any individual, dispositions which are "of the flesh, and not of the Spirit," are directly contrary to the mind of Jesus Christ, who blended a Paul and an Apollos, who blended the Jews and the gentiles—men of all characters—in one mass, and impressed upon them all the faith of Christ and the love of immortal souls.

It necessarily results from the doctrine of the text, that all dependence on any other resource than that of the communication of the Spirit will be found to be delusive, when the Divine Being shows us what work is his own. To "put our trust in an arm of flesh" is to renounce our dependence upon him. There cannot be a double dependence, any more than a double adherence. It is true men must be employed; but the fact of their mere instrumentality should never be lost sight of, and their dependence on the Spirit of God should be ever recognised. "The gold is mine," saith the Lord, "and the silver is mine." Let us not speak on this all-important subject in such a manner as to lead to the idea that the obtaining of money, and the setting in motion a vast apparatus, is all that is necessary to secure the salvation of the heathen. Any language like this is in direct opposition to the doctrine of the Scriptures. If the Spirit of God be the great agent,—if it is his work, and his work alone, and the whole is accomplished by the energy of that mighty Spirit,—how can we secure success by any other agency? If we should depend on the accumulation of any property far beyond our present resources, and the Divine Being were to withdraw from us his sacred and enlivening influences, he would leave us in the same situation as he did the Jews when he said, "Where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble."* They might multiply instruments and extend their labour, but they could not secure the salvation of a single soul,—they could not deposite *in the heart* a single sentence of divine truth,—they could not form one holy disposition: but if the Spirit of God be "poured out upon us," as we have reason to believe it will be at some time, every other instrument will be subordinated, and must be; and then it will be found that the Divine Being, when he has poured out

* Jer. ii. 28

his Spirit, will never suffer an adequate quantity of property to be wanted. He who has given the Spirit will never suffer his work to be stopped by the want of the riches of the earth: he will sooner turn the very stones of the street into the precious metals, than suffer the means to be wanted of carrying on this work. My brethren, if we can once draw down the Spirit of God on our churches, the rich will contribute their property; the pious will contribute their prayers, and so much of their property as they can afford; and the leisurely will give up their time. This divine agency, when its effects are once really felt in the heart, will enlist into the service every power which men possess, and will compel it to yield its quota. "Thou shalt see, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the gentiles shall come unto thee. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together; the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory."

Finally, I would just observe that the doctrine of the text teaches us to regulate our confidence with respect to the success of every particular mission, at the same time that it animates that confidence in regard to the final success of the work itself. We cannot say how long the Spirit may be withheld; but that it is withheld, that the outpouring of it has not yet taken place, we have melancholy evidence. It is plain that it has not been vouchsafed to this society, or to any other, to the extent that we anticipated, so as to produce a total transformation. Great effect has been experienced in the South Sea islands; and that appears to me to approach the nearest of any to what we are expecting; but even that, delightful as it is, is on a small scale. But the general success has not yet seemed proportional to the extent of the means. "The wood is prepared for the altar, but the fire from heaven has not descended upon the sacrifice." The number of missionaries is as great, probably, as that employed at the first promulgation of Christianity; but here is the mighty difference,—the Spirit of God, at that period, descended from on high. "The Divine Being bowed the heavens and came down," and infused an immortal energy into the missionaries, to which we are strangers at the present day.

It is proper to inquire, why is not the Spirit of God poured down now? —what is there that has caused the withholding of this Spirit? We may be assured there is some reason. The Divine Being is a sovereign, but he is not a capricious being; and we ought to plead with God, and ask why it is that he withholds from us this Spirit? We may be assured the time will arrive when deliverance will be wrought in the earth; but hitherto we have "brought forth wind,"—only wind. He "hath not wrought deliverance," though we know deliverance will be wrought. May we not, in the spirit of humble supplication, ask, Why that honour is reserved for other nations and other times?—Why we are permitted to see only the skirt of his garment, and not per-

mitted to see his face?—Why he holds back his blessings, and we contemplate only a few drops of that mighty influence of which the heavens are full, and which he might, and doubtless will, pour down in mighty torrents? My brethren, let the friends of each society, instead of being led for a moment "to sacrifice to their own net, and burn incense to their own drag,"—while they are thankful for what has been done,—inquire why they are not permitted to do more, and why the adamantine barriers of impenitence and rejection are permitted to oppose themselves. Propose this question to the philosopher, and he will repeat the language of the ancient prophet, and say, "Hath a nation changed its gods, which are yet no gods?"* We know, my brethren, that no nation ever quitted its gods till Jesus Christ came into the world: we know that no nation has forsaken actual idolatry, much less turned from things present to realize an immortal prospect —to fix its affections on God as the eternal God, except by the energy of the Spirit; but we are encouraged to expect the power and grace of God to accomplish these purposes, and we hear him saying in his Word, "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this:" and if there be something rendering us unworthy to be the instruments of so great and important a change, let us search it out, and mourn for it before God.

At the same time, my brethren, though we are taught to acquiesce without repining, without murmuring, in the dispensations of God, let us point our views to a future period, when the Spirit will be poured from on high,—when Jesus Christ will pour out his Spirit upon all flesh,—for then "the wilderness shall become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest." The Divine Being will not frustrate the design his Spirit has excited; he will not cause the holy agitations which have been felt to be in vain; he will not suffer those desires which have been excited in the minds of Carey and others to evaporate without being in some manner fulfilled. Great things have been effected by the instrumentality of those who have gone before us, and we are now employed in the same great work. How many thousands are pouring out their prayers and tears for the spiritual conversion of the heathen! There has been a spiritual movement of divine love whereby many have been rendered willing to spend and be spent, yea, to die for the conversion of the gentile nations; earnestly desiring to conduct them to the Saviour, whom they never saw, but "in whom they believed, and rejoiced with joy unspeakable." But when this Spirit has come from on high, we shall witness a different scene, going far beyond the desire and the effort: then it will be a most glorious era: we shall see nations casting off their idols, returning to God, "asking the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward;" then will be again "heard on the high places weeping and supplication, because they have perverted their way, and forgotten the Lord their God:" then there will be heard, not the cry of the wounded, nor the lamentation of the orphan and the fatherless over parents slain in battle, but sorrow of a more sacred nature; a new burthen pressing

* Jer. ii. 11.

on the heart—the burthen of sin. They will look back on the scenes of Jesus Christ in the garden of Gethsemane, and at the cross, and feel as much oppressed as if they had heard his groans and his prayers; they will then believe the simple sayings of God; "the powers of the world to come," the greatness of eternity, will occupy their attention; they will then look, "not at the things which are seen and temporal," but at the sublime and glorious "things which are eternal;" the distance between that period and the judgment-day will, in thought, be annihilated; they will feel themselves standing on the threshold of the infinite and everlasting mansion, and their whole souls will be absorbed in the nothingness of time, the grandeur of eternity, the awful hurtfulness of sin, and the infinite importance of the great salvation. Those things which we speak of with freezing accents and cold hearts will then be felt in the inmost soul; conviction will seize upon the transgressors, while others will be rejoicing in the Lord, and it will be as it was in the time of the building of the second temple; "the voice of shouting, and the sound of weeping," will be mingled together, as in the time of Ezra. While troops of pilgrims will be pressing towards the celestial city, many millions of prodigals will return to their Father's house, and will lift up their eyes to the Saviour who died for their sin. These things MUST take place,—they did take place at the first preaching of the gospel. By some, such occurrences would be regarded as disorderly. God be praised, there were such disorders as these, and well would it be for us were our religious assemblies frequently interrupted by such disorders. The time will come, assuredly, when "the Spirit will be poured from on high;" and who knows what will be the effect when the Divine Being applies the truths of his Word to the consciences of his creatures. Then will "the wilderness become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest:" then, my brethren, all the powers of nature, all the resources of providence, all the advantages that are possessed by men in every variety and state, will jointly contribute to aid the general triumph. "The multitude of camels shall come up; the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah: all they from Sheba shall come; they shall bring gold and incense, and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord." Kings shall offer their gifts, and the majesty of all earthly sovereigns will bow to the majesty of the Saviour. All the spoils of earthly grandeur will be laid at his feet, and none will be "exalted in that day," but the Lord and his Messiah. This, next to our own salvation, is the only proper object of our solicitude: if we can but attain this,—if we can but witness this,—every thing else will follow: this touches the source and author of all motion; and in proportion as we can engage the Divine Spirit on our side, in that proportion will Omnipotence be exerted, and who can stay his hand?

There are some who do not expect these scenes to be realized; but we say to them, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God."* Before him all difficulties vanish; it is only the exertion of the same sort of power as every sincere Christian has witnessed,—

* Matt. xxii. 29

the power of which he is himself the subject; and what reason can he assign why he should have been touched by the Divine Spirit,—"made willing in the day of his power,"—and the same power not be rendered effectual in the breasts of others? The same influence which was extended to a Paul will effect the renovation of the world. No new power is requisite: it is the same; even that, without which we might "preach in vain," and you "hear in vain;" it need only to be poured from on high, and then "the wilderness will become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest." Let us, then, in our prayers, especially and earnestly entreat this Divine communication. Never let us pray for the Baptist mission, or any other, without recognising distinctly in our prayers our dependence on the Divine agency; never let us for a moment lose sight of this, but direct our attention to it as the main object of expectation and hope,—regarding it as indeed the work of God. It is his special prerogative to renew the heart of man, and to build up from the ruins of the fall a temple to his praise; and when this is accomplished, "all the kingdoms of the earth will flow into it,"—the nations that are saved will walk in the light of it: and how can we, who consider ourselves "the temple of the Holy Ghost," be better employed than in imploring him to "send forth his light, and his truth?" Let us address him in the language of the church: "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab and wounded the dragon?" "Where is thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies?"* The church of God is now praying to this effect, and the best pledge of the final triumphs of Christianity results from the combined influence of prayer and active exertion in a spirit of dependence. Our earnest desire that the heathen should be converted, and that Christianity should be published and received among all nations, may be regarded, we hope, as the earnest and fruit of that Divine Spirit whose more copious effusion will accomplish the work. Let us welcome the rising beam, "the day-star" that ushers in the morning of a brighter day than has ever yet shone upon the earth. Let us fervently pray that the Divine Spirit may be poured out upon the world, and that the Redeemer may "take to him his great power, and reign" universally in the hearts of men.

* Isaiah li. 9; lxiii. 15.

## XI.

## THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.*

MATTHEW xvi. 3.—*The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting him desired that he would shew them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather; for the sky is red: And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day; for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites! ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?*

[PREACHED AT BRISTOL, FOR THE NATIONAL SCHOOLS, NOVEMBER 28, 1820.]

So violent were the prejudices excited by our Saviour's preaching, that those who could agree in nothing besides agreed in the attempt to discredit his authority, and destroy the effects of his ministry. An instance of this is presented in the words just read, in which we find the Pharisees and Sadducees forgetting their mutual antipathy in their common hostility to the pretensions of Jesus Christ. The Pharisees, as you are aware, were a sect among the Jews, who had multiplied to an enormous extent their additions to the law of Moses; which, together with the other parts of the Old Testament, they received as inspired. The Sadducees, a sort of religious skeptics, generally supposed to have confined their belief to the missions and writings of Moses, rejected the doctrines which connect us with a future world; the resurrection of the body, and the existence of spirits. These two parties, at variance on all other occasions, concurred on this; and both, "tempting" our Lord in the hope of ruining his reputation, "desired that he would shew them a sign from heaven;" an indication that he was the Messiah, yet more miraculous and convincing, according to *their* idea, than any he had before exhibited. By this "sign from heaven," they probably meant some *direct* manifestation of the Divine glory, without that intervention of second causes which seems to have impaired in their minds the impression of the miracles they had witnessed. They imagined that an *immediate* vision of the Divine Majesty would afford an evidence of his being the Messiah, more unequivocal and satisfactory than could be afforded by any performances however supernatural. Such a notion was delusive, and arose entirely from the depraved and obdurate state of their minds. When we find those who are already in possession of sufficient evidence yet demanding more than is given, we may be sure that, in such cases, no evidence would be sufficient. Accordingly, it is not the practice of the Divine government to comply with such unreasonable desires:

* Printed from the notes of the Rev. Thomas Grinfield.

but, while *he that hath*, or that improves his present advantages, *shall receive abundantly more: from him that hath not*, or that uses not what he has, *even that which he hath shall be taken away.*

From the suggestion of the words first read, I propose to consider some of the most obvious and palpable signs which the present age exhibits of the advancement of our Saviour's kingdom; and I shall take occasion to remark previously, that it is an important part of wisdom,—a duty which as Christians we ought not to neglect,—to *discern the signs*, to watch the moral aspect of the times in which we live. We are not, indeed, called or qualified to penetrate into futurity; but we may study with advantage that portion of providence in relation to the church and the world with which we are most nearly connected.

Of the benefits to be derived from this study, the first is, that we shall thus learn more of *the intentions and character of the Divine Being*. The providence of God is the execution and development of his mind. In observing the course of providence, we see the operations of his hand, and read his will as truly in its fulfilment as in his written revelation. Again: our *devotion* should be modified, to a certain extent, by the signs of the times. In our prayers, we may derive encouragement from these to plead with God for the accomplishment of his own gracious designs and promises: we may adapt our humiliation to the demand of the season; acknowledge the hand that wards off impending evils or crowns us with signal favours; and be reminded what benefits we may appropriately implore. And, once more: such a habit of advertence to the prominent features of the age may be useful in the regulation of our *active* duties. In our exertions to promote the good of mankind and the glory of God, we are not merely to regard his general will as applicable to all times alike; we are to inquire, also, his particular design in reference to the existing state of things,—to study what he would have us do at such a particular crisis. Does He appear, for instance, by various concurring events, to be preparing for the more extensive and rapid diffusion of the gospel? Then it becomes our appropriate duty to provide whatever means seem the best adapted to promote that transcendent object. Some persons, who are sufficiently attentive to the more private details of Christian duty, take but little interest in the fortunes of the universal church: a failure which, in such cases, arises principally from that inattention to the signs of the times reprehended by our Saviour in the text.

Having offered these suggestions, I shall now advert to some plain, unequivocal signs and indications of the present age. I call them plain and unequivocal, in distinction from such as may be thought of an ambiguous character. With respect to some of these signs, while events are passing by us, there may be differences of sentiment; differences which will probably disappear when another generation shall look back upon our own times. In contemplating an object, we find it necessary to recede to a certain distance, in order that we may the more comprehensively survey what pressed too closely and became

too prominent, during our nearer approach; and thus the present portion of providence will be better understood, in all its bearings, when the events which compose its principal features shall have been for some time passed. The following remarks, however, will be confined to the most striking peculiarities of the present age.

1. Of these, the first I shall mention is, the great increase of mental exertion. Some periods have been marked by intellectual inaction; the human mind has appeared as in a state of torpor and dormancy: not a luminary has broken the prevailing darkness; not a distinguished name has been left behind: knowledge has been not merely stationary, it has not merely not been progressive, it has *retrograded*. Such was that period in which, after the decline of the Platonic philosophy, Aristotle reigned in all the schools, and was idolized as *the secretary of nature*, who *dipped his pen in intellect*. From his dictates there was no appeal; and, what was most remarkable, his empire extended to theology. As nothing can convey a higher idea of the intellectual greatness of that extraordinary man, than the unrivalled despotism he then exercised over human minds, so nothing can present a more humiliating picture of the weakness of those minds than the depth of mental degradation to which they thus descended. The Reformation was the great instrument in undermining and demolishing that long-established system of intellectual despotism and degradation. Under the light diffused by the Reformers, men awoke from the trance of ignorance and infatuation in which they had slept for ages; they felt those energies of thought and reason which had been so long disused; they began to investigate truth for themselves; they started to that career of genius and science which has ever since been rapidly advancing. Had this been the only benefit it produced, the Protestant Reformation would deserve to be numbered among the noblest achievements of mental energy: viewing it in this light, even infidels have applauded Luther and his associates.

Since that era the greatest advances have been made in every department of science, physical and moral; more especially during the last century, in which the progress of knowledge has been more rapid than, perhaps, during any similar period of human history. In addition even to the grand discoveries of Newton, respecting the laws of nature and the system of the universe, such a mass of varied information has been accumulated, that Newton himself, could he witness the present state of his own science, would be astonished at advances he never anticipated. Every year, nay, almost every day has added something; while the registers of discovery have found it no easy task to keep pace with the rapidity of its march. The nomenclature of the preceding fifty years has been found so inadequate to the demands of the latter half-century, that it has become entirely obsolete: and a new nomenclature may be required by another age. This is remarkably exemplified in the department of chymical science: nor has less been accomplished in moral and political philosophy. The genius of legislation has been greatly elucidated within the present age. The principle of religious toleration and liberty of

conscience, which required for its demonstration the reasoning powers of the immortal Locke, is now universally acknowledged. In a word, philosophy has been completely *popularized*, and mingles with every order of society, from the palace to the cottage: all approach its illumination, all participate in its benefits.

It is true that we cannot boast, in these latter times, of oratory or poetry equal to that of Demosthenes or of Milton. These arts, being derived from nature, the natural emanations of enthusiasm and fancy, are early brought to perfection; and are probably cultivated with less advantage in a more refined state of society. The case is different with respect to the pursuits of science and philosophy: these are permanently and interminably progressive: the induction of facts, the investigation of phenomena and principles, are susceptible of perpetual advancement: and if it were preposterous to suppose that those great masters of poetry and eloquence will ever be superseded, or perhaps even equalled, it were not less preposterous to deny that the present amount of knowledge,—immense as it now appears,—may yet, to a future generation, appear comparatively inconsiderable. Invention has exhausted its powers: the stores of philosophy are inexhaustible. In every successive age, it must be allowed, the increase of science, though continual, becomes less and less observable: it is during the infancy of knowledge that its growth is most apparent; afterward the vast general extent renders us less sensible of every new accession; just as in a large assemblage of buildings, like that which composes your own city, we are scarcely aware of its constant enlargement; while, in a village, every particular addition becomes an object of attention. Thus, less surprise is excited in the present age than would have been felt in any preceding period, by every fresh augmentation of our intellectual stores. It is an age of universal curiosity, in which ignorance is felt as a calamity. The extensive circulation of books, and the multitude of cultivated minds, distinguish this period beyond comparison with any that has preceded it. Never before was that prophetic feature of the latter days so strikingly exhibited—"Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."

2. A second feature by which the present age is distinguished is an increased attention to the instruction of the lower classes.

The time has been when the education of youth in the inferior walks of society was entirely neglected: it is only during a later period that the first impulse was given to that vast machine of universal instruction, which continues to operate with increasing energy. It is painful to reflect on the unnatural separation, in whatever relates to the *mind*, which formerly subsisted between the common people and those who fill the higher ranks of the community; the monstrous chasm which divided the gross barbarism of the former from the superfluous refinement of the latter. It seemed as if an entire oblivion had taken place, in reference to their original fraternal relation, as members of one family, children of a common father. There is little, it is true, in poverty, to gratify the taste or the imagination; but it is time, surely, to lose sight of those merely adventitious accompaniments which glitter

on the eye of fancy and refinement,—time to recognise, in the humblest portions of society, partakers of our nature, with all its high prerogatives and awful destinies: it is time to remember that our distinctions are exterior and evanescent, our resemblance real and permanent; that all is transient but what is moral and spiritual; that the only graces we can carry with us into another world are graces of Divine implantation; and that, amid the rude incrustations of poverty and ignorance, there lurks an imperishable jewel,—a principle transcending in its value the whole material creation,—a soul, susceptible of the highest spiritual beauty, destined, perhaps, to adorn the celestial abodes, and to shine for ever in the mediatorial diadem of the Son of God! *Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones.*

Among the instances of an increased attention to the welfare of the lower classes may be numbered those improvements in the penal code of our laws, which have been proposed by a living lawyer,* who appears to me at least to have understood the true nature of legal justice much better than it has been comprehended heretofore. When so much light is thrown upon a subject,—before very imperfectly investigated,—the most important amendments may be anticipated in the laws, especially those which affect the criminal's life; and we may hope the time is not distant when, in conformity with the Divine standard, the crime of murder shall be regarded as the only proper subject of capital punishment.

In short, we appear at length to have become sensible that every thing merits our earnest attention and encouragement which tends to promote the intellectual, moral, and civil improvement of that vast portion of the population in which the majority of numbers and physical strength resides, and which virtually includes the destiny of the nation; that broad basis of the pyramid of society, which, while it continues sound, affords stability to the whole, but by a rent in which the entire fabric must be endangered. Nothing in nature can be conceived more frightful, nothing more fatal to the existence of an empire, than an unprincipled, profligate, irreligious, turbulent populace; quiet perhaps at the present moment, but ready on the first occasion to break out into fury and violence. It is a volcano, covered with a surface of verdure, but prepared to scatter desolation around on the first eruption that may disturb its fearful quiescence; it is an edifice raised upon a mine, and constantly exposed to the peril of an explosion from the precarious ground and terrible materials beneath! We have witnessed, in a neighbouring kingdom, an example of the horrors to which a nation may be subjected by the unrestrained depravity of an uninstructed and irreligious populace—horrors which Heaven avert from ourselves! which exceed the conception of the most gigantic imagination! For nothing in the most savage part of the brute creation can parallel those fiery excesses of popular passion, which desolate whatever is *social*, whatever is *sacred*, in the institutions of mankind! But on "the evils of popular ignorance" it is the less necessary to enlarge here, as the subject has been recently illustrated by a living writer,†

* Sir James Mackintosh. † Rev. John Foster.

whose genius pours new light over every topic that engages his notice.

3. A third, and a most favourable characteristic of the present times, is the improved state of preaching, and the more abundant supply of the public means of grace. The preaching of the gospel has been appointed and acknowledged by God as the grand instrument of converting sinners and saving souls: the doctrine of Christ crucified (however it may be regarded by the disputers of this world) has been proved, in every age, to be "the power of God to the salvation of every one that believes;" to be the weakness of God, which is stronger than men; the foolishness of God, which is wiser than men. During the latter part of the last century, and down to the present time, there has been a manifest increase and improvement of Christian instruction. Evangelical truth has been administered in a purity and abundance to which preceding ages bear no proportion. And here, in justice to the established clergy of the realm, I cannot but remark the great advance in piety and diligence which they have exhibited during the last half-century. They have gone forth in numbers, rekindling the lamp of heavenly truth where before it had burned with a dim and sickly ray; they have explored and cultivated many a neglected spot, into which other labourers could not (for obvious reasons) gain admission with equal facilities of influence; and far be it from any of their dissenting brethren to regard their success with any other than a *godly* jealousy, a *holy* emulation!

Turning from our own country to heathen lands, we behold yet more striking indications of an improving age. The present is the very era of missions: all the various denominations of Christians, as with one great simultaneous impulse, have started up from their long slumber of missionary inaction, awakened on a sudden to the magnitude and obligation of this neglected enterprise. There seems to be a universal feeling among Christians that the time is come for fulfilling our Saviour's last command, *going forth into all the world, and teaching all the nations;* and that, if we should any longer hold our peace, *the very stones in our streets would cry out against us!* The Spirit of Christ no longer contains itself within its accustomed bounds; it breaks forth from its undue confinement, and spreads its influence in every direction. No part of the earth so remote, so forsaken, that has not begun to be invaded, that is not at least proposed to be attempted by some of those devoted champions who have gone forth in the peaceful warfare of the gospel. Nor are the symptoms of preparation less favourable among the *heathen* themselves: a general spirit of readiness appears to be presented in the islands of the Pacific, in the districts of the Cape, of India, and America. Every thing seems to announce that though the labourers are as yet but few, the fields are already white for the approaching harvest.

4. The advancement of the Bible as the great and only standard of Christian faith and practice is a fourth remarkable feature of our times. The Scriptures have always been professedly received as the highest authority among Christians; but never was that authority so publicly and completely recognised as in the present age. The Church of

Rome early impaired, and at length almost entirely abolished, the authority of the sacred volume, by her multiplied additions to its contents, as well as by her extreme ignorance of its genuine instructions. Her priests were exalted from humble ministers of the Word into arbitrary *legislators:* for he that has the power of annexing to the law whatever interpretation he may please is not an administrator of the law, but a *tyrant.* As an instance of the disuse and oblivion into which the Scriptures had fallen among the Romish clergy, it is related of the celebrated missionary Xavier, that having met with a copy of part of the New Testament before his going out to India, he resolved to take it with him, as he thought it might be of use in his missionary labours. What a change in the state of the Christian world, with regard to the estimation in which the Scriptures are held, has taken place since the days of Xavier! That eminent person—who possessed, one would hope, amid all his errors, some real piety—thought he might as well take part of the New Testament with him when he went as a missionary to India; he conceived it might possibly be of some use! The Bible is now carried abroad in the front of the ministry; and the missionary preachers aim, as much as possible, to lose themselves in the effulgence of its heavenly light. It is a remarkable fact, that the most devoted, the most successful advocate, beyond comparison with any other, which the Bible Society has yet found, is himself a priest of the Romish church;* a man who presents the extraordinary phenomenon of a popish clergyman protesting, in the very bosom of his church, against her iniquities; and declaring his determination to persevere, in spite of the devil and the prophetic beast, in diffusing those Scriptures, of which he has already circulated several hundred thousand copies.

Such exertions, it is reasonable to believe, will prove instrumental to the purifying of Christendom from papal corruptions at no very remote period. In the event of a persecution among the Romish clergy being occasioned by such exertions, a secession, similar to that of the Protestant reformers, might probably once more take place within their own body. God grant that such may be the issue! Would to God that the apocalyptic warning might be heard and obeyed by multitudes of that corrupted hierarchy, which owes the perpetuation of its influence to the suppression of the Scriptures; "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and receive not of her plagues!" Never before was there such a universal consent among Christians as to the supremacy and sufficiency of the Bible in all religious questions: never before was the maxim of Chillingworth so practically acknowledged, that "The Bible, the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants." In all disputed points, it is now agreed that we should appeal solely to "the law and the testimony;" and, where these are silent, that we should imitate their silence.

5. As a fifth "sign of the times," may be mentioned that increasing harmony which prevails among the genuine disciples of Jesus Christ. At last the central principle of union begins to be extensively felt and acknowledged: amid all the diversities of external discipline or subordinate opinion, the seed of God, the principle of spiritual and im-

* Leander Van Ess.

mortal life implanted in the soul, is recognised by the sincere followers of the Lamb as the transcendent point of mutual attraction in the midst of minor differences. Even Protestants and Catholics, influenced by a kindred piety, can now cordially embrace each other; as in the case of that zealous professor of the Romish church to whom I before referred, who corresponds in terms of cordial affection with the Protestant secretary of the Bible Society for its foreign department. The essential spirit of religion begins to assert its ascendency over all besides. The most enlightened, the *selectest* Christians in every denomination are ready to cultivate an intercourse with kindred spirits, with all who hold the same essential principles, in any other. Formerly, such an intercourse was rarely indulged, and accompanied with reserves and apprehensions: good men looked more at their distinctions than their resemblances, at points of repulsion than those of attraction. Now the case is altered; and it may be truly said that, in this respect, *the former things are passed away.* Now, the saying of our common Master has received a fulfilment almost unknown before: "*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, even by the love ye bear to each other.*"

The reason why Christians have been so tardy in arriving at a disposition so much to be desired, is principally to be found in those exaggerated notions of the importance of church government under some particular form, which so long swayed the minds of excellent men: the difference of outward garb concealed the unity of the spirit which inwardly animated their hearts alike. In the *seminal* principles of their religion, in their equal dependence on an incarnate Redeemer and a sanctifying Spirit, they have now discovered a centre of attraction,—a common chord to which all their hearts vibrate in unison: and thus, without the smallest sacrifice of their respective sentiments or practices, they can indulge the most entire affection, and exert the most zealous co-operation. Can it be supposed that such an improvement will not silence the old sarcasm of infidels, derived from the prevailing dissensions of those who professed themselves the disciples of one Master? Can it be questioned whether the Christian army, thus closely imbodied, will prosecute with redoubled vigour their warfare against the powers of darkness? If the kingdom of Satan, when not divided against itself, is able to stand, can we doubt that the family of Jesus Christ, no longer disunited, will prosper in its consentaneous exertions? Besides which, the unanimity of Christians is at once an indication and a presage of the Holy Spirit's more copious effusion on the church; at once an effect and an earnest of the love of Christ to his followers; while it affords a delightful emblem and foretaste of that perfect state in which all are for ever united in harmony and affection.

6. In the last place, I cannot but number, among the prognostics of the destined triumph of Christianity, that extension of civil and religious liberty by which the present times are distinguished. In this view, I cannot but cordially rejoice in the political revolutions which have recently taken place in Spain, Portugal, and Naples. Nothing could be imagined more unfavourable to the cause of religion than the

prior condition of those kingdoms, in which a despotic tyranny prevailed alike in the church and the state. Such revolutionary commotions among the nations must be still expected, until the arrival of that happy period when liberty, civil and religious, shall be universally established.

The enjoyment of civil liberty is essential to the development and exertion of the best and noblest energies of the human mind. Deprived of this, nothing truly great can flourish in the moral world. There exists, indeed, an indissoluble connexion between the civil and the religious freedom of a nation; and, whatever may be thought of other considerations, every friend to the prosperity of religion must rejoice in the advancement of that liberal and enlightened policy under which alone it is favoured and fostered. It is only under a free representative government that this can be the case. Never did religious liberty flourish in the chilling, deadly atmosphere of despotism: it can open and spread only in the sunshine of political freedom. As the greater includes the less, the civil implies also the religious liberty of a state. Religion grows and blooms among the highest and most palmy branches of the tree of liberty, and ripens in luxuriance among its topmost boughs. This is the natural, established order of things in the present world: and, let it be remembered, we are not entitled to expect any *miracles*, properly so called, to facilitate the coming of our Saviour's kingdom. In the whole course of missionary enterprise there has not been a single check upon the accustomed laws of providence, not one interruption of the connexion which subsists between primary and secondary causes, not one deviation from the ancient course of nature. It is by a favourable arrangement of political circumstances that religion is most likely to be advanced; by the establishment of that genuine and legitimate freedom, which is equally removed from the extremes of anarchy on the one side, and tyranny on the other. It is this that seems to be the precise temperature, the genial climate of religion: and doubtless God will prepare his own way in this as in every other respect: *every valley shall be exalted, every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked rendered straight, the rough places plain; and all flesh shall see the glory of the Lord; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*

In glancing at the different institutions which have arisen in these later times for the moral and spiritual benefit of mankind, it is pleasing and striking to observe how exactly they have fitted in, and, as it were, *dove-tailed* with each other. First appeared the missionaries, as pioneers to break up the ground and open the way; then the Bible Society followed; and, at last, the system of education completed the design. Each arose, in its order, to sustain and aid the others. Had any one of these existed alone, it would have proved inefficient for want of the rest. As it is, the finger of Providence is discernible in the very succession in which these institutions made their appearance; while, in their union and co-operation, they constitute an apparatus completely adapted to promote the Christian renovation of the world: regarded in the order of *means*, the teachers, the lesson, and the power of reading it, appear well adapted to *make the man of God perfect* in

*every good word, and work.* We speak, you will observe, of external instrumental preparations: there is still needed, as you are aware, another and a higher *preparation of the heart in man;* a spirit within us which must be imparted from above. The machinery is provided, but the Spirit alone can move the wheels.

With respect to the institution for which I have the honour to be an humble advocate on this occasion, if there be any force in the preceding remarks, few words are necessary to recommend it to your patronage. As you would live in a land of Bibles and readers of the Bible, in a nation dignified as a seminary of religious instruction; as you would desire, when called to quit the present stage of being, to leave your children in a nation of Christians; it becomes you, more especially in a season of public alarm, to support an institution which justly assumes the name of *national.* If the man who rescues from barrenness a neglected portion of the country, and spreads over its face fertility and beauty, deserves and obtains our praise, shall *that society* solicit our support in vain which rescues from all the evils of ignorance multitudes of those in the humbler walks of life, who might otherwise *perish for lack of knowledge;* while it opens their understandings, at least in a degree, to understand the Scriptures of eternal truth and life? It is impossible to doubt that such an institution is one of the great means which the Divine Being employs for the accomplishment of his own great end. He does not christianize the world by magic: we are not to expect religion to descend from heaven, or to rise upon the earth like a beautiful vision! It will indeed descend from heaven, and arise upon the earth; but this will be by regular, appointed, adapted means; by means such as those which are now set at work, and require our continued assistance: means which afford an omen of the desired success; since we cannot conceive why all this energy should have been impressed on the minds of men, if not for the providential accomplishment of one grand result—the transformation of the kingdoms of this world into the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.

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## XII.

## THE LOVE OF LIFE.*

**Job ii. 4.**—*And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.*

[PREACHED AT BRISTOL, FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE BAPTIST MISSIONS, NOV. 1820]

Though these words were uttered by the father of lies, they are no lie. The truth of a communication does not always depend on the character of those who convey it.

* Printed from the notes of the Rev Thomas Grinfield.

The expression might perhaps be more properly rendered, 'skin upon skin," or "skin *after* skin:" skins, of which the uses are not easily enumerated, being the principal article of property and exchange in a primitive and pastoral state of society.

I propose briefly to consider the principle of attachment to life, so emphatically asserted in these words; some of the reasons for which it is implanted; and some improvements which may be derived from the subject.

I. The love of life is the simplest and strongest principle of nature. It operates *universally*, on every part of the brute creation, as well as on every individual of the human race; *perpetually*, under all circumstances, the most distressing as well as the most pleasing; and with a *power* peculiar to itself,—while it arms the feeble with energy, the fearful with courage, whenever an occasion occurs for defending life, whenever the last sanctuary of nature is invaded, and its dearest treasure endangered. This mysterious principle does not act with a variable force, dependent on the caprices of will or the dictates of reason; it operates with a steady, constant influence, as a law of nature, insensible and yet powerful. It corresponds, in the animated world, with the great principle of gravitation in the material system, or with the centripetal force, by which the planets are retained in their proper orbits, and resist their opposite tendency to fly off from the centre. The most wretched, not less than the most prosperous,—those who seem to possess nothing that can render life desirable, not less than those who are surrounded by all its pleasures,—are bound to life as by a principle of central attraction, which extends its influence to the last moments of expiring nature. We see men still clinging to life, when they have lost all for which they appeared to live. A striking instance of this has been recently exhibited by that extraordinary individual* who, rather than lose his life in the scenes of his renown, has exchanged the pinnacle of power and fame for the deepest degradation and obscurity. There are few qualities that command greater admiration than the superiority to the love of life and the dread of dissolution: as we admire things in proportion to their difficulty and rarity, we are astonished by that heroic bravery which can triumph over the first law of our nature. The Scriptures frequently recognise and appeal to this fundamental principle: thus, in apparent allusion to the text, our Saviour demands, "What shall a man give in exchange for his *soul*," or, as the word literally denotes, his *life?* The only promise annexed to any of the ten commandments exhibits life as the chief earthly good, and its prolongation as the reward of filial piety: while, in the Proverbs, Wisdom is represented as having "length of days in her right hand, in her left riches and honour."

II. I proceed to assign the reasons, or some of the reasons, for which this instinctive attachment to life is so deeply implanted in our nature.

1. The first and most obvious reason respects the preservation of

* Bonaparte.

life itself. That which, of all our possessions, is the most easily lost or injured, is that on the continuance of which all other things depend. The preservation of life requires incessant attention and exertion; the material requisite to feed the vital flame must be collected from innumerable sources, at great expense of time and trouble: the spark of life is perpetually exposed to the danger of extinction, like a lamp carried in a stormy night, that requires to be covered by the hand, and seems every moment ready to expire. Nothing but the strongest attachment to life could secure it, amid continual exposures, from sudden or premature destruction: without the operation of the self-preserving instinct, man would be literally like a shadow, that is here to-day and gone to-morrow. On the first departure of prosperity, on the first preponderance of sorrow over joy, in this checkered scene,—in which the colours of good and evil are so constantly intermingled that it is often difficult to say which predominates over the other,—how many, unrestrained by the natural love of life, would forsake their stations; how few, unsupported by attachment to being, would persevere in their course to the end, or "run with patience the race set before them!" Our first father would probably have fulfilled, in the letter, the sentence he incurred, and died on the very day of his transgression, thus destroying the human race in their original, had it not been for the benevolent care of his Creator, by which his existence, and the desire of its continuance, were secured for the great purpose of his moral probation. For life, we cannot forget, is, in its highest use, the season of our trial for an eternal state of being. This is the point of view in which its preservation becomes unspeakably interesting. It stands connected with nothing less than the incarnation, sufferings, and glory of the Son of God; and, whatever is the importance of those stupendous mysteries, the same is the importance of human life, considered as the "time of our visitation!" The results of the whole process of redemption, the accomplishment of the greatest designs of the Deity, are involved in the continuance of this probationary state of existence.

2. A second purpose answered by the principle we are considering is the promotion of industry and labour. Life must be loved, in order that it may be preserved; and preserved, in order that it may be employed. The original denunciation of death was preceded by the sentence of a life of labour: "*Cursed is the ground for thy sake; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread, until thou return to the ground.*" In every other state of society, and perhaps in none so much as in the most refined state, the greater part of the community must necessarily be subjected to labour. Under the best possible form of government, some must produce what is to be enjoyed by others. This unavoidable condition of subjection and servitude will be attended, in many cases, by great hardship and suffering. In such circumstances, nothing but that strong attachment to life of which we are speaking could reconcile the weary sufferers to a voluntary continuance in a state that entails so much endurance. Yet, while every humane person must regard

such instances of excessive toil with compassion, and desire to alleviate them so far as he may be able; this laborious condition of the multitude should be considered as a dispensation of mercy blended with judgment. For what would be the state of society, disturbed as even now it is by crimes, if the multitudes of those who are at present confined by labour were let loose upon the public in all the wantonness of a licentious imagination and unbridled passions? Reflect, for a moment, what misery and desolation must arise from such a mass of depravity, such an accumulation of cupidity and malevolence, abandoned, without any fixed employment, to its own turbulent impulses! This, it must be acknowledged, is a melancholy picture of human nature; but it is such as truth requires. How great a benefit, therefore, that necessary condition of labour, which acts as a barrier of defence against the wildness of human passions, and says, as it were, to that tempestuous ocean, "Thus far shalt thou come, and no farther!" But the desire of preserving life is the strongest incentive to all this salutary industry and toil.

3. A third object to which the same principle is subservient is the protection of life from the hand of violence. Without some strong restraining sentiment, the life of individuals would be exposed to continual danger from the disordered passions of others. The first crime, of a social nature, committed by man, was the extinction of his brother's life; and the first penal law, enacted by God, was directed against a repetition of that crime: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." The love of life, so strongly felt in every bosom, inspires it with a proportionate horror of any act that would invade the life of another. Every one burns with indignation against an assassin, as against his own personal enemy; every one feels interested in the discovery of such a criminal, and would consider himself *honoured* in stepping forward to drag before the tribunal of justice one who is regarded as if he had injured every partaker of his nature! This universal horror and exposure to the public vengeance, which peculiarly attaches to the crime of murder in all civilized states of society, cannot but operate as a powerful and important safeguard of human life. The magistrate and the law owe their whole protective efficacy to that sentiment of attachment to existence which is a *law written on every heart*.

III. In adding a brief improvement of this subject, we may infer,

1. The fall of man; the universal apostacy of our nature from the state in which it originally proceeded from the Divine Author. Created with this inextinguishable desire of existence, we are destined to dissolution: our nature includes two contradictory principles,—the certainty of death, and the attachment to life. This fact affords the clearest evidence that we are now placed in an unnatural, disordered, disjointed condition; that a great and awful change has passed upon our race since our first father came from the hand of God. And this change must be owing to *ourselves;* it cannot be ascribed to our *Creator*, without the supposition of a sufficient cause in our own misconduct.

e revelation breaks the silence of nature, while it tells us th··

*one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all, because all have sinned.* On any other hypothesis, the problem is inexplicable; for, can the Father of the universe, himself the source of all created tenderness, be conceived to have thus treated his own offspring, without a real and sufficient *cause?* Can malevolence and misery issue from the bosom of infinite goodness and love? Can He who gave us life, who bound us to it by so strong a tie of attachment, deprive us of it, and doom us to a corruption from which nature recoils, without a necessity arising from ourselves? Let any one that is a parent judge by his own parental feelings,—according to the appeal of our Saviour himself, founded upon this analogy. But the Scripture makes all clear: we are like the potter's vessel described by Jeremiah, which was at first made good, but was marred after it was made: "*How is the gold become dim? and the fine gold changed! The crown is fallen from our head; wo unto us, for we have sinned!*"

2. But the subject may serve to remind us, also, of the salvation which provided us the antidote to our ruined condition. Every human being, it is true, is treated as a criminal, who, though he may be reprieved for a time, must expect to suffer the penalty of the law he has violated: every individual, in his turn, is led forth to his destiny of death. This, however, is consistent with the plan of salvation. It is a *restorative* dispensation under which we are placed: we are not treated as innocent,—as if we had never offended,—but as criminals chastised for disobedience, while they are placed on trial for mercy. The deluge presented a grand monument of the Divine wrath on sin; and a smaller exhibition of that wrath is repeated in the death of every human being. In such a situation, what we want is *life;* and this is abundantly offered. *Eternal life is the gift of God by Jesus Christ!* "*I,*" said Jesus Christ, "*I am the life! I am the bread of life! Whosoever believeth in me shall live for ever!*" "*The life,*" says John, "*was manifested: whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely!*" Such are some of the last accents of inspiration. As the value of a medicine is proportioned to the malignity of a disease,—how earnest should be our desire, how grateful our acceptance, of such a remedy! To pass from death to life; to triumph in the prospect and approach of the last enemy; to enjoy even here many a delightful foretaste of the heavenly immortality; to experience a vital union with the Father of spirits, and hereafter to attain the consummation of this union, and bask for ever in the brightness of His presence; *behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us! How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?* Such neglect involves a degree of guilt and infatuation which it will require eternity to deplore, and eternity to comprehend!

3. As a third improvement, connected with what has been observed, let me remind you of the *medium* by which this Divine life is imparted and received. There must be a medium of contact between the benefit and the subject of that benefit; between the eternal life provided, and the Spirit for which it is provided. This connecting medium is faith.

*Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ.* Faith is the link of union between the salvation as prepared and perfect *without* ourselves and our own personal being. This is beautifully, though briefly, expressed by Peter, when he assures the cripple whom he had healed that the cure had been effected through the medium of *faith*: "*His name, through faith in His name, hath made this man whole.*" *Faith* was as necessary in the subject of the cure, as the *name* itself on which his faith relied. The work of the Spirit of Christ on the heart is as necessary to our salvation as the work of Christ himself,—his obedience unto death, and his intercession in heaven.

4. In the last place, the subject concurs with the occasion to remind us of the duty, the obligation under which we lie, to impart the knowledge and enjoyment of these vital, eternal blessings, to our suffering fellow-sinners. The *civil* and merely *temporal* benefits of Christianity are great: the water of life, in its passage through a country, diffuses innumerable improvements wherever it pursues its peaceful course; the very *leaves of the tree of life* are given *for the healing of the nations.* But far be it from us to recommend the civil as the *great* and *ultimate* blessings of the gospel: these are of a *spiritual* and *eternal* nature; furnishing a perfect antidote to the dread of death—a perfect satisfaction for the desire of life, so deeply implanted in the human breast.

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## XIII.

### NOTES OF THE FOLLOWING SERMON,

TRANSCRIBED FROM THE MANUSCRIPT OF MR. HALL.

"*Behold the Lamb of God.*"

I. THE import of this appellation.

1. The peculiar features of His personal character.
2. The design of His death.

1. His personal character. His innocence. His patience. "Such a High-priest became us," &c.

2. He was the Paschal Lamb. Exod. xii.

Draw the parallel in several particulars. Both sacrifices the instrument of effecting a great deliverance. The benefit of both moral, not physical. The Lamb must be perfect offered by and for all the people. Blood sprinkled. Not a bone broken. Time of offering.

II. The purport of the exclamation,—that He is an object of attenton. Its most proper object. Three qualities entitled to attention

1. Intrinsic greatness. An incarnate Deity, the Ruler of all things, the mysterious Mediator and Advocate.

2. Newness. What so new as the invisible Creator clothed in human flesh—The Ancient of Days cradled as an infant; He who upholdeth all things sinking under a weight of suffering; the Lord of glory expiring on the cross; the Light of the world sustaining an awful eclipse; the Sun of Righteousness immerged in the shadow of death?

3. The relation an object bears to our interest. The Lamb of God a most interesting object to all classes of men: (1.) To sinners; (2.) To saints."*

## ANALYSIS OF THE SERMON,

AS REPRESENTED IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES.

I. Import of the appellation "Lamb of God."

1. Features of the personal character of Christ: (1.) Innocence; (2.) Patience.

2. Design of his appearance.

Points of resemblance between His sacrifice and the Passover. In each, (1.) A great deliverance achieved; (2.) A destruction, otherwise inevitable, averted; (3.) The benefit moral, not physical; (4.) The personal qualities of the victims similar; (5.) The blood required to be sprinkled; (6.) The sacrifice to be regarded by the whole congregation; (7.) The time of the offering the same; (8.) No bone to be broken; (9.) The Passover prepared by fire, as an emblem of torture.

II. Design of the exclamation, "Behold!"

An object worthy of supreme attention from all:

1. From sinners. Three qualities which command attention, exhibited here in the highest degrees: (1.) *Greatness;* (2.) *Novelty;* (3.) *Usefulness.*

2. From believers.

3. From the redeemed in glory.

4. From the holy angels.

5. From the Divine Being.

* These notes give the plan of the sermon as it was preached at Bedford: at Bristol the application of the text was extended, as the following sketch represents, to *all* orders of beings.

## THE LAMB OF GOD—HIS CHARACTER—HIS SACRIFICE—AND HIS CLAIM TO UNIVERSAL ATTENTION.

JOHN i. 35. 36.—*Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!**

[PREACHED AT BROADMEAD, BRISTOL, NOVEMBER, 1820, AND AGAIN AT BEDFORD, MARCH, 1821.]

THE forerunner of our Lord manifested a peculiar anxiety to impress the minds of his hearers with a conviction that he was not himself the *Messiah*. Yet there appears to have existed a party among his disciples who entertained an improper attachment to his ministry, preferring it to that of our Lord. Their disciples constituted two distinct classes: the partisans of John, disposed to exalt his pretensions greatly beyond their real nature and his own assertions, seem to have countenanced the opinion that he was the great expected personage. To counteract such a fatal misconception, the Baptist embraced every opportunity of referring his followers to Jesus Christ, as well as of explaining his own character. He was, as he represented, "the voice crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord;" he was "the friend of the Bridegroom," not the Bridegroom himself: and, with the same view, he uttered, on two occasions, the declaration contained in the passage just read. The testimony there expressed is not the first which he had borne to Christ: it appears that on the preceding day he had announced Jesus as "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world:" and, as the evangelist relates in the text, "Again the *next day after* John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, *Behold the Lamb of God.*"

While we admire the disinterestedness of this great man in endeavouring to convince his converts that Jesus Christ was infinitely his superior, we cannot help supposing that probably his ministry and his life were the sooner closed in consequence of the inordinate attachment of his adherents. It was unfit that he should remain as a rival to the Saviour: he was therefore withdrawn from the scene, and his ministry prematurely closed, that every degree of confidence for salvation might be removed from the creature, to be fixed on the *Saviour* alone.

In considering the testimony borne to Jesus Christ in the text, I shall direct your attention, first, to the *import of the appellation;* and then to the *purport of the exclamation*, as it may be understood to express the *claim which Jesus Christ possesses to the attention of every order of beings.*

* The present transcript is the result of the notes taken by the Rev. T. Grinfield, at Bristol, collated with the notes taken at Bedford.

I. The *import of the appellation* "the Lamb of God." There are *two* things which, in all probability, John had in his view when he used this appellation: the distinguishing features of our Saviour's *personal character*, and the great *design of his appearance and death.*

1. In the first place, the expression "Lamb of God" has respect to the *peculiar features*, the *personal character of Christ.*

In the Scriptures, as perhaps in every known language of mankind, a *lamb* has been selected as the popular symbol of *innocence* and *patience.* These were qualities that peculiarly distinguished our Saviour, and formed, on every occasion, the most conspicuous features of his character.

(1.) He was a perfect pattern of *innocence.* As one of his apostles describes him, "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." His freedom from every taint of original sin was secured by his miraculous conception: hence the angel at his nativity declared to the Virgin Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee; and therefore, that *holy* thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the *Son of God.*" As he advanced in age, all his actions were completely consonant with the law of God. He could say to his bitterest enemies, "Which of you convinceth mé of sin?" He could affirm that, when Satan came, he had nothing in Christ. Even the opponents of Christianity have never attempted to impugn the moral character of its Author. It was *necessary* that "the Lamb of God" should be "without spot or blemish." "Such a High-priest *became* us;" because, as an *example*, he could not have been explicitly proposed to our imitation, had the slightest imperfection attached to himself; and, as a *sacrifice* for sin, he could not have been acceptable in the eye of infinite purity and justice, had he been any other than a spotless victim. Accordingly, his conduct was, in every particular, blameless and virtuous. In the most trying situations, under every form of temptation, we find him never failing: there appears nothing in his character in the *smallest* degree inconsistent with the idea of absolute human perfection. The greatest absence of every thing like malevolence,—of every thing merely selfish,—appears in all his actions. His miracles were always miracles of *mercy and beneficence;* his omnipotence was exerted *only* to do *good:* it seemed as if the *secret* of his power resided *only* in benefiting *others*, and relieving the miseries of those who surrounded him; as if he *existed* only for *them*, and became the most helpless of beings when *his own* interest was concerned. Innocence is a negative term, it properly denotes only the absence of faults and offences; in this respect it formed but a *part* of his character. *His* innocence was crowned with infinite *beneficence.*

(2.) A second, and an equally distinguished feature of his character, implied in the appellation of a *lamb*, is his *patience.* "The Son of Man," as he said of himself, "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to *give his life a ransom* for many." He bowed to the will of his Father, and was "*obedient* unto death, even the death of the cross." In the midst of injuries and insults, the most unmerited and aggravated that were ever suffered, he exhibited a perfect pattern of patient resigna-

tion. He never resented the violence of his enemies: "When he was reviled, he reviled not again." "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." There was indeed *one* instance in which "he opened his mouth:" arraigned before the high-priest, he answered not a word; until, in reply to the demand whether he was the Son of God, he answered in the affirmative; thus breaking silence before his enemies *only* when his confession ensured his condemnation to death. The miraculous powers he possessed over nature and the minds of men he never exerted to avert his own sufferings, or avenge his wrongs upon his persecutors. Though the elements were at his disposal, and demons subject to his command, yet, in the crisis of his affliction, nothing was visible but compassion for the guilty: "Father," he cried, "forgive them, for they know not what they do!" Nor would he suffer his disciples to retaliate the injuries he received: he rebuked Peter when he drew the sword on Malchus; he rebuked his disciples when they would have called down fire on the Samaritans, saying, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." Gentleness and tenderness, a sensibility to the sufferings of others, and an indifference to his own,—these formed the most prominent traits of his character: in *these* he places the *essence* of his religion, so far as it is practical and relative to others. Of *other* virtues, we may say that they form *parts* of the Christian character; but *these* are emphatically the Christian *spirit* itself: in proportion as we are patient, compassionate, forbearing, forgiving, and ready even to *suffer* for the good of others, we *have* "the mind of Christ."

It was thus that he illustrated, in his own example, the nature and genius of the gospel dispensation, as superior to every other. None of his predecessors in the church of God could compare with himself here. The *law* was a *severe* dispensation; its tendency was not so much to cherish the milder virtues, the lamb-like graces of the gospel. Moses, though the "meekest of men" under that economy, was overtaken by the impetuosity of his spirit when he dashed in pieces the tables inscribed by the finger of God. The miracles of Elijah and Elisha were sometimes destructive: the former commanded fire from heaven, the latter bears from the wood to consume his enemies. John the Baptist was austere in his manners, and terrific in his preaching: there was in him much *moral grandeur*, but it was of a savage and uncultivated aspect; it resembled the lonely and severe character of the wilderness in which he appeared: he was "the axe laid to the root of the trees;" the son of thunder, commissioned to summon the guilty before the tribunal, and denounce judgment on every unfruitful professor. But Jesus Christ was mild, affable, social, compassionate; "the friend of publicans and sinners;" who came to "feed his flock like a shepherd, to gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom." When he beheld the city of Jerusalem, he wept over it: when he said to all who heard him, "Learn of me," he could truly and peculiarly add as at once an example and encouragement to his disciples, "for I am meek and lowly in heart." So well might he be

styled, with a view to the features of his character, "the Lamb of God."

2. But we shall form a very inadequate idea of the full import of John's expression, if we confine it to the *example* of Jesus Christ. This is not the only, nor perhaps the *principal* view in which we are to understand the appellation "Lamb of God!" There is *another* object of the highest importance to *us*, and to which his innocence and patience were requisite. He appeared not merely as a pattern of holiness; though, in this respect, we have seen in him an unrivalled preeminence above all the messengers of God: but he is to be principally regarded as the *Saviour*, "who taketh," or *beareth*, "away the sin of the world." That the Baptist, in calling Jesus Christ "the Lamb of God," had a reference to his *sacrificial* character, is manifest from the explanatory clause he added on the preceding occasion—"who taketh away the sin of the world." The *example* of Christ, however perfect, had no proper power to "take away sin:" the best example, as we know, has but a feeble influence in correcting depravity, and none whatever in removing guilt. It is unnecessary, however, to multiply words in *proof* of this doctrine; because it is our privilege, on the present occasion, to address those who are continually reminded of Christ as the only mediator between God and man. In the appellation employed by the Baptist there is then, secondly, a distinct reference to the *great design of his appearance and death.* It points him out as the Lamb which God provided and accepted. It marks the *sacrificial* character of Christ, prefigured by the legal offerings. This Divine Lamb fulfilled all that was signified by those ancient sacrifices, which consisted principally of lambs; and especially all that was represented by the paschal lamb. A lamb was offered daily, in the morning and evening, in the tabernacle, and afterward in the temple: but the paschal sacrifice was solemnized with a peculiar attention and publicity once in every year. The Jews regarded this as the most important of all their observances. It was the most ancient of them all, instituted on their departure from Egypt, in commemoration of their deliverance from the destroying angel: and, though at first it reminded them of that event, yet afterward it probably served to direct their expectations to the great sacrifice for sin by the promised Redeemer. The circumstances and the purport of this remarkable ceremony may be found fully described in the twelfth chapter of Exodus; a chapter replete with the doctrine of Christ crucified. On that memorable night in which the angel of the Lord slew all the first-born of Egypt, not excepting those of the royal household, he was ordered to spare the families of Israel, which had been directed to exhibit a sign of the redemption by Jesus Christ, by sprinkling the blood of a lamb on the posts of their doors. The destroying angel recognised this consecrated token, and *passed over* the house thus marked, without smiting any member of the family it contained. That this was typical of the salvation by Jesus Christ is evident from the application of it made by the apostle Paul, when he says, "Christ, *our* passover, is sacrificed for us; *therefore* let us keep the feast." The idea of Christ being the

great end of that ceremony is so plain, so certain, that the apostle takes no pains, as he does on many other occasions, to establish the point by reasoning; he simply assumes and asserts it as a well-known truth.

Many particulars may be pointed out in the resemblance between the paschal sacrifice and "the Lamb of God:" I proceed to trace the parallel through some of the most remarkable.

(1.) The passover was designed to *commemorate* a great deliverance, that of Israel from the captivity and slavery of Egypt; and it was designed to *prefigure* a deliverance far greater—that of mankind from a tyranny far more abominable, a depression far more miserable; from the captivity of Satan, the slavery of sin, the dread of wrath to come; that the happy subjects of this divine redemption may be placed under the conduct of providence and grace in their passage through the wilderness of this world, until they shall be settled in the land of promise and eternal rest.

(2.) The passover commemorated a deliverance from a destruction otherwise *inevitable:* it was the only appointed means of safety; there was no other possibility of escape from the angel of Divine wrath. Thus the redemption which is in Christ Jesus is the only refuge of hope set before us,—the only appointed means of escape from that wrath which will come upon all that neglect this great salvation.

(3.) In *both* these cases (it deserves attention) there exists no *natural* relation between the *means* and the *end:* the benefit of the sacrifice is *moral, not physical.* The sprinkling of the blood on the doors of the Israelites had no *intrinsic* efficacy whatever to preserve them: none can suppose any such efficacy therein, as that by which causes produce their effects in the course of *nature.* The Divine Being *appointed* the blood to be the sign and the instrument of the deliverance; and, being thus appointed, it served to arrest the progress of the destroying angel. So it is with the sacrifice of Christ. Between the death of Christ and the expiation of guilt there was no such relation as that which subsists in nature between secondary causes and their appropriate effects: it was a *moral* relation, resulting from the will and appointment of God, who accepted the death of Christ as a consideration of sufficient dignity to satisfy his justice and vindicate his law. It had no efficacy as a *natural* cause; on the contrary, it left all *natural* causes to operate as before: but it became a *moral* motive with God; an authentic instrument for the sanctification and acceptance of those who are "elect, according to the foreknowledge of God, unto obedience, and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus." It was a powerful cause in and upon the Divine mind, moving Him who moves all things. For the sake of *this* great sacrifice it seemed fit and right, and in every respect worthy of Him, "*by* whom and *for* whom are all things," that every penitent believer should be treated as if he had never sinned; that, through *this*, he should be washed, justified, sanctified, and glorified. And there was no more a change of the Divine mind in the latter than in the former instance; since the Deity foresaw all that should come to pass. At a distance He contemplated the sacrifice of Christ: He beheld in it the honour of the Divine law,

me display of the Divine purity and justice. This sacrifice, being always present to his contemplation, was the ground on which sins committed under the first covenant were pardoned to the penitent; and it is with a reference to the efficacy of this expiation, as reflected back from the cross, that Christ is called "the Lamb slain from the founda tion of the world."

(4.) Again, we may observe the similarity which appears in the *personal qualities* of the two victims. The paschal lamb must be perfect, a male of the first year, without spot or blemish. So Christ, as we have seen, possessed all *moral* perfection; exhibited every virtue, without a single fault or defect. He possessed also the *physical* perfection of man: he was slain, not when withered by age or decayed by sickness, but "in the flower of his strength, while his breasts were full of milk, and his bones of marrow,"—when youth was vanishing into mature manhood.

(5.) Observe, further, the slaying of the paschal lamb did not avail, unless its *blood* were *sprinkled*. The blood was shed in order that it might be sprinkled; the sprinkling was necessary to preserve the Israelites. Neither will the blood of Jesus Christ, my brethren, prove of saving efficacy unless it be *applied*. When wrath shall overwhelm the unbelieving, in the judgment of the last day, it will be of no avail to plead the merit of this great sacrifice, unless we have approached it for ourselves. "Having boldness to enter into the holiest by the *blood* of Jesus, we must draw near with a heart sprinkled from an evil (or an accusing) conscience." None will be saved from the destruction of that day, though they may have lived in the midst of Christian privileges, who cannot say with the apostle, "We are come to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel." The merit of the Redeemer's blood is infinite, but its efficacy is confined to its application. In his own words, "except ye *eat* my flesh, and *drink* my blood, ye have no life in you." The apostles unite the *name* of Christ with *faith* in his name, as the means they had employed in healing the cripple at the gate of the temple: "His name, through *faith* in his name, hath made this man whole; yea, the *faith* which is by him hath given this man this perfect soundness in the presence of you all."

(6.) As another particular of the parallel, it may be remarked, that while many of the legal sacrifices were offered *by individuals* in their private or public characters, the paschal lamb was required to be slain and offered *by the whole congregation of Israel;* it being understood by all that he who neglected this important sacrifice would lose its benefit,—would be cut off from the congregation. "Behold," here, "the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the *world!*" The blood of animal victims streamed for ages on the Jewish altars, but did not take away sin, even from the Jews themselves: the benefit to be derived from those offerings was chiefly derived by those who looked *beyond* them. Except as shadows of the true Sacrifice for sin, they were to be considered merely as *civil* rites. The voice with which

they spoke could not, in general, be heard "within the vail." The greater part of the Jews were worshippers of the outer court, and rested in their sacrifices as means of external and civil advantages. But in "the Lamb of God," proclaimed by John, we behold an oblation sufficient for the whole world; a fountain opened for sin, and flowing in all directions; an element of pardon and eternal life, free and extensive as the atmosphere we breathe, which encompasses every portion of the earth's surface. "*He*," says the apostle, "is the propitiation for our sins, and not for *ours* only, but also for the sins of the *whole* world:" "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin."

(7.) In the next place, the *time of slaying the paschal lamb* agreed with the time of our Saviour's sacrifice. The sufferings of Christ took place at the feast of the passover; and the very hour of the day appears to have corresponded with that at which the paschal lamb was slain. In the chapter of Exodus before referred to, it is required that the lamb should be killed *in the evening;* or (as the original signifies, and as it is rendered in the margin of our version), *between the two evenings;* that is, between the chronological evening and the natural: the one commencing immediately after the sun had passed the meridian, or after twelve at noon; the other, by computation of time, being at six o'clock. Thus the middle hour *between the two evenings* will be at three in the afternoon; the point of time at which our Lord expired on the cross. He was fastened to it "at the sixth hour," which answers to our noon; and, "about the ninth hour," or three in the afternoon, "He cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost." Thus, at the moment when the paschal lamb was appointed to be slain, did "the Lamb of God" expire, under the stroke of the Divine justice.

(8.) Great objects consecrate all that surrounds them: they impart a portion of their own grandeur to every thing they touch, to every circumstance with which they are connected. It was required that "*not a bone of the paschal lamb should be broken;*" it must be sacrificed entire: and this was ordered that it might the more exactly represent the great Sacrifice. When Christ was crucified, the soldiers (as you remember) finding him already dead, forbore to break his legs, as, according to the custom, they had broken the legs of his two fellow-sufferers; and thus, as the historian observes, was fulfilled that which had been written: "a bone of him shall not be broken." This circumstance, though in itself minute, serves to show that Jesus Christ, as our Sacrifice, was equally the subject of the prediction, and the substance of the type.

(9.) Finally, the paschal lamb was permitted to be prepared as *food* by no other means than *fire*. What could more appropriately prefigure the agonies of "the Lamb of God," who sweat great drops of blood in the garden; who was parched with thirst on the cross; who, having submitted himself to endure the indignant justice of the Governor of the universe, experienced the awful truth that "our God is a consuming fire;" when "His soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death;" and when, in the climax of his anguish, he exclaimed,

"Oh, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He contended, in those moments, with all the storms and billows of the Divine wrath; he tasted the penalties of eternal death.

It appears, then, that there was in many particulars a striking resemblance between Jesus Christ and the paschal sacrifice; and the great beauty of the passover arises from this resemblance. How strangely, therefore, are *they* mistaken who confine their view of "the Lamb of God" to his *example*, and deny the sacrificial and atoning nature of his sufferings. We might ask such persons, *why* was even inanimate nature, as it were, in convulsions at his death? *Why* did the heavens put on sackcloth, and the sun hide his face in darkness? Why were the rocks rent, and the earth shaken? Or (if this be considered as merely impassioned declamation), we may demand, *Why* do we meet with such constant and emphatic expressions regarding the blood, the cross, the sacrifice, the death of Jesus Christ? Why should there have been so vast a preparation of legal sacrifices, of burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, expressly compared by the apostle (especially in his Epistle to the Hebrews), with the death of Jesus Christ?—Why all this, if nothing more was meant by his death than the completion of his *example*, the *sealing of the truths he taught* with the blood he shed. Supposing *this* to be all that was intended to be understood by such representations, we can only say that the gospel would be the greatest imposition on common sense that ever was presented to the world; it would combine the most pompous pretensions with the most meager reality, of all existing compositions.

II. We proceed to consider, as the second part of the subject, *the spirit and design of the exclamation* uttered by the Baptist in the text, as it may be understood to express *the claim which Jesus Christ possesses to attention from beings of every order: all* are interested in complying with the summons given in those words, "Behold the Lamb of God."

It appears that the Baptist did *not* principally mean, by this exclamation, to direct the *eyes* of his disciples to the person of Jesus Christ as a *visible* object; in *that* sense, none could comply with the call, except the few who were present in the scenes of his transient ministry: the Baptist desired to command the attention of his hearers to the *character and office* of "the Lamb of God." In this sense it is that the term "Behold!" is frequently used in the Scriptures, where no *literal vision* of the object is intended: it is used to denote that the object *thus* introduced is deserving of *attention:* as when the angel says, "*Behold*, I bring you glad tidings of great joy!" or when the apostle exclaims, "*Behold* what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!" In the text the meaning is similar to that of the *definite pronoun*, as though John had said, "*This* is the Lamb of God:" just as, on another occasion, he said, "*This* is he of whom I spake." The purport of the exclamation, therefore, is, that Jesus Christ, as "the Lamb of God," deserves universal attention; that he is the greatest object of admiring regard which the universe presents.

In illustrating the spirit of the exclamation thus understood, we observe the claim which "the Lamb of God" possesses on the attention of *all mankind*. Mankind are comprehended in two distinct classes, they are either sinners who remain in their original character; or they are believers, who, though not ceasing from sin altogether, are yet delivered from its dominion. *Here* is an object pre-eminently worthy the attention of *both* these classes:—

1. And, in the first place, of *all who remain, as sinners, in their original character and state.* In every possible view in which an object can deserve regard, "the Lamb of God" claims from all such persons the most earnest attention.

There are three qualities which entitle an object to our regard.

(1.) The first is its own *intrinsic greatness.* On this account the sun, the moon, and the stars, those illustrious splendours of the firmament, have attracted the attention of mankind in every age and nation. But the wonders of the material world are merely subordinate to those of the *intelligent and moral universe;* and *here* an object is exhibited incomparably greater, in the scale of being, than the celestial luminaries. Here we may behold Deity incarnate: God manifested in human nature! Turn aside, and see this great sight: contemplate this object with fixed attention, till your heart is suitably affected by the contemplation: gaze with the eye of faith on this brighter "Morning Star," gaze on this nobler "Sun of Righteousness," till every sublunary object is eclipsed by its superior splendour. Never was Deity revealed in our nature but in the person of Jesus Christ. He alone could be truly called "Emmanuel, God with us." "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" a fulness that deserves the most earnest and persevering research, while it must for ever baffle finite comprehension. *This* is "the great mystery of godliness;" the study of admiring angels: the masterpiece of the manifold wisdom of God; the wonder of the universe.

(2.) A second quality in an object that excites our attention, and raises it to surprise and astonishment, is *novelty.* We esteem a thing the more for being *new:* there is a vivifying influence in the *freshest and rarest* appearances of nature or of mind. But where will you find another object worthy to be compared in *novelty,* in entire *originality,* in *singularity* combined with greatness, with the object *here* presented, "the Lamb of God?" Travel in idea through creation,—climb the loftiest heights,—descend to the lowest depths,—take the wings of an angel, and fly to distant worlds; no such being will be found as He who once tabernacled in the flesh—"the Lamb that was slain," and that is now seated at the right-hand of God, as "the Lamb in the midst of the throne." Heaven and the heaven of heavens could not contain him; yet he dwelt, to all appearance, in the body of an infant: —the invisible Creator clothed in human form,—the Ancient of Days cradled as an infant of days,—"He who upholdeth all things sinking under a weight of suffering,—the Lord of life, the Lord of glory, expiring on a cross,—the Light of the world sustaining an awful eclipse —the Sun of Righteousness immerged in the shadow of death!"

Never before was there such a spectacle in earth or heaven. Even inanimate nature seemed to sympathize with his last agonies; heaven itself descended to "behold the Lamb of God:" and well it might; for there was *then* a *greater* prodigy on earth than any which heaven contained. Well might angels "desire to *look* into" the mysteries of man's redemption; and nothing but the most astonishing infatuation can prevent us from following such an example. Mankind are accustomed to admire profound philosophers, victorious heroes, or celebrated poets what are all such objects of admiration in comparison with this unparalleled phenomenon, which exhibits all the attributes of Deity, adapted to human apprehensions?

(3.) Once more; objects arrest our attention that bear a relation to *our interest.* Men are interested by that which involves their security from evil, or promises their advancement in prosperity. Objects which are *great* command attention; those which are *new* excite curiosity; but if, in addition to its *greatness* and its *novelty*, an object bears a manifest *relation to our most* important *interests*,—if it involves our defence and safety,—if it forms the pillar of our support,—if it supplies the shield of the soul, the only hope for the guilty, the only comfort for the dying, the only prospect of eternal happiness,—surely, my dear brethren, *such* an object is calculated to awaken in our hearts the most lively affections and desires; and *such* an object is "the Lamb of God." Not only great and wonderful in *himself*, he bears an essential relation to our most important—to our *eternal* interests. He comes to deliver us from misery, and promote us to happiness. He is competent to satisfy all the secret wants and desires of our nature. "Come unto me," he says, "all ye that are weary, and I will give you rest. I am the Bread of Life: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever; I will raise him up at the last day." These are some of His words: from whom besides will you hear words like these—"*the words of eternal life?*"

Jesus Christ came to save that which was lost: he laid down his life to accomplish our salvation. Nor was there any *waste* of life in that sacrifice: every portion of his infinite energy was requisite to the attainment of such an object; nothing less than the power that upholds all things was adequate to sustain the weight of human sin. He whose almighty influence diffuses itself through the heavens and earth, and preserves all orders of being, He alone endured our punishment; He "trod the wine-press alone;" He "looked, and there was none to deliver:" there existed *no other* way of salvation than that which he has opened. *The justice of the Deity, not to be propitiated by any other means, pursues the transgressor on earth and in hell; nothing in the universe can arrest it in its awful career, until it stops in reverence at the cross of Christ!*

As our salvation from the effects of sin is a deliverance from a far worse than Egyptian captivity and misery, so its accomplishment required a far greater exertion of Deity than was required to arrest the billows of the Red Sea. Never did "the mighty God" more fully display the greatness of his power, than when he showed himself

"mighty to *save*, even to the uttermost." He fixed the foundation on which we may build our hope of immortality, and find it to be "a hope that maketh not ashamed," founded on the Rock of Ages. He went into the shadow of death, into "the lowest parts of the earth," that he might lay *deep* the *basis of that edifice which was to rise as high as the throne of God!* "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree," that we might become partakers of his own divine nature. *This*, my brethren, is a view of "the Lamb of God" of the *last* importance to be taken by us all. If you see him not in this character, you see *nothing* to any valuable purpose. You have taken hold of *nothing*, you have grasped only *shadows*, if you have not taken hold of *Christ*, your *Life*. Flee to him; cleave to him: say of him in the sincerity of your heart, "This is all my salvation and all my desire."

There is only *one* class of beings by whom the object presented in the text is treated with unconcern; for even the legions of hell regard it with a fearful interest:—utterly to "neglect so great salvation" is the peculiar malady of impenitent sinners in the present world. But what infatuation can be compared with this? If there be any *other* door by which you may hope to enter into heaven, avail yourselves of that "door of hope" without delay. If any *other* name be given under heaven in which you may safely trust for the salvation of your soul, place your trust in that favourite name, and leave this Saviour to others; but if there exists *no other* door that can admit us into heaven than that which *He* has opened who says, "I am the door, I am the way, the truth, and the life,"—if *no other* name has been given under heaven whereby we may be saved than the name of Jesus Christ,—if *this* is the *only* dispensation of mercy; *then* let us turn our regards from every other refuge, and fix them on *this* alone. "Let all the house of Israel," let all the world, "know assuredly that this *Jesus*, who was crucified, is both Lord and Christ; and they who believe in him are justified from all things." In the land of Israel there were *several* cities of refuge, and the criminal might flee to that which was nearest: but there exists only one for *us;* one "hope set before us, to which we must flee for refuge;" one "Man who is a covert from the storm, a shadow from the heat." In "the Lamb of God" you may obtain present peace: beholding Him, you may die with tranquillity and joy; and rise, through Him, to the mansions of eternal glory. Behold, therefore, ye sinners ready to perish, "behold the Lamb of God."

How is it possible that *those* can escape "who neglect this great salvation, which at first was spoken by the *Lord, God* himself bearing witness with signs and wonders, the gifts of his own Spirit?" *Not* to behold *such* an object is "to have eyes, and not to see:" *not* to attend to *such* a call is "to have ears, and not to hear!" Better *not* to have eyes, and see; better *not* to have ears, and hear; better *not* to have an understanding, a heart, a sentient nature capable of thought and feeling; better to be numbered with the brutes, or to be a mere plant, or stone, than not to believe this divine report,—than to remain one to whom this "arm of the Lord" is not revealed,—than to see in

Christ "no beauty that you should desire him," to regard him "as a root in a dry ground," instead of discerning in *such* a Saviour, "the *power of God*, the *wisdom of God!*"

2. But there is a second class of persons among mankind—*those who have repented and believed;* "the Lamb of God" has an equal claim to the continued and earnest regard of his believing followers.

Some benefits we receive in such a manner that any further attention to their cause is unnecessary; no motive but gratitude requires us to think of them again; they are complete, whether or not we recur to their origin. This is not the case with the benefits conferred by Jesus Christ. Besides the claim of *gratitude*, which ought to outlast the immediate operation of benefits received—(for we should think it unnatural in a son to forget his parents as soon as they were in the grave),—*here* we are dependent on our Benefactor for a *continuity* of blessings. It is not enough to have regarded him at first as the only Source of pardon and salvation: he is as necessary to us from day to day as when we *first* believed in him. He is not a Saviour whom we may forget, having once for all received his benefits: he is the Source of continual energy through the whole of our career. The Bread of Life can no more be dispensed with in the *spiritual* life than in the *natural:* in respect to the one as well as to the other, we must say, "Give us this day our daily," or, as the original word signifies, our *essential* "bread!" "Lord, evermore give us this bread!" We must apply for perpetual repetitions of our Saviour's pardoning grace, and justifying merit, corresponding with our perpetual transgressions and deficiencies. The spiritual life of a Christian can only be maintained in its vigour by a ceaseless emanation from Jesus Christ. "The life which I *now* live," says the apostle Paul, "I live by the faith of the Son of God: it is not I that live, but Christ liveth in me." In other words, he was continually "beholding the Lamb of God." Every Christian partakes of his experience, and to the end of his life feels the same need of Christ,—of his example, his doctrine, and especially of his atonement,—which he felt at first, when he fled alarmed and distressed to the foot of the cross. When the rock was smitten in Horeb, the water continued to flow through the wilderness for the constant supply of the Israelites; and they drank of that water daily, until they reached the promised Canaan. "That rock was Christ;" and thus we must daily drink of the spiritual streams that flow from Him. We must look unto Him, and we shall then be *lightened, and our faces not ashamed.* When our Saviour, in his great condescension and humility, washed the feet of his disciples, Peter at first refused, saying, "Lord, thou shalt never wash my feet." On this, our Saviour replied, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me." "Lord," said Peter, "not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." This our Lord declined, observing, "He that is washed, needeth not save to wash his *feet;* and now ye are clean." This implies, in the spiritual application which it was probably designed to receive, that after having bathed at our first repentance in the fountain of that blood which "cleanseth from all sin," we must still repair to the same for constant purification

from those innumerable defilements which, by our frailty, we cannot but contract in our walk through the present world. Even the clean require to be again and again purified. The sins of a single day would be sufficient to condemn us: weighed in the balance, we should be found wanting. The believer never subsists on an independent source of his own—he lives by *faith:* faith is not the reservoir, but the habitual receiver. He is continually directing his eye towards *Him* in whom it has pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, and that out of that fulness we all should receive even grace for grace; grace in the streams, corresponding with grace in the fountain. Let us live more by faith in Christ; "the just shall live by faith:" it is the safest and the happiest life. On every occasion of infirmity and distress, let us renew our application to that Saviour who said, in answer to the complaint of his apostle, "My grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is perfect in thy weakness." "Most gladly, therefore," adds the encouraged apostle, "will I glory even in my infirmities, that the *power of Christ* may rest upon me." The moment we forget our dependence on Christ, and are puffed up with a conceit of our own merit or strength, we are in danger of falling into the snares of Satan.

3. Having dwelt the longer on the more direct and obvious application of the doctrine taught by John the Baptist in the text, to the two classes of mankind, as either impenitent sinners or justified believers, we may *extend* the exclamation, in the third place, to the *redeemed in the world of glory.* From *them*, no less than from their brethren on earth, "the Lamb of God" claims the highest degree of admiring regard. He retains this appellation, as we learn from the last book of Scripture, in his present exalted state; and it is remarkable that the name which expresses his humiliation to the death of the cross is selected as the name under which he is adored in the world of glory: "I beheld," says John, "and lo, a multitude, which no man could number, gathered from all nations, stood before the throne and before the *Lamb:* and they cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God and to the Lamb! Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the *Lamb*, for ever and ever!" It is strange that any should be found who, calling themselves Christians, refuse to pay Jesus Christ that worship here on *earth* which he is represented in these passages as receiving in *heaven!* Such persons, if they are admitted into heaven, will have indeed to learn a *new song*, for they must learn a *new religion!* But *you*, my dear brethren, "have not *so* learned Christ:" you know that the Redeemer holds the most distinguished place in the world of glory; he sits at the right-hand of God; he is the centre of the glory that shall be revealed; his presence constitutes to the redeemed the principal *charm* of heaven. It was his own desire "that those whom the Father had given him may *be with him where he is*, and may there *behold his glory.*" It is only in him that the Deity is visible: "No man hath seen God, nor can see; he dwells in light which no man can approach: the only-begotten Son has declared him." Deity requires to be shaded and softened, by putting on the vail of our nature, before it can be suited to our feeble perception: the glory of the Lord must shine in the face of Jesus Christ.

We read concerning the redeemed inhabitants of heaven, that "they hunger no more, nor thirst any more; because the *Lamb*, who is in the midst of the throne, feeds them with the bread of life, and leads them to fountains of living water:" a description which implies that Jesus Christ is himself the source of celestial beatitude.

4. But in the fourth place, there is yet another order of beings to whom "the Lamb of God" presents an object of peculiar attention and profound admiration. *The holy angels*,—that innumerable company of spirits who "excel in strength,"—are represented as deeply interested in the service and glory of the Redeemer. From its infancy, they watched with anxiety the fortunes of the rising church. They announced the birth of Christ with exulting strains; they ministered to Christ in the scenes of his temptation, his agony, and his burial; they cheered his apostles with the first tidings of his resurrection, "He is not here, he is risen." Even after his ascension, they still lingered with a compassionate concern among his sorrowing disciples, and assured them of his final return: "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus shall come again in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." And in that day of his final return, "when the Son of Man shall come in his glory," there shall be "all the holy angels with him." Accordingly, among the glories which accompany the manifestation of God in the flesh, the apostle enumerates this,—that "He was *seen of angels*:" and he represents the Father as introducing the Son into the world with this proclamation, "Let all the angels of God worship him." It is not improbable that those glorious beings are themselves, in some respect, involved in the blessings of that stupendous plan by which "things in heaven" are gathered together in one centre with "things on earth." Angels may probably be *secured* in that felicity to which saints are *promoted*, by the mediation of Jesus Christ: and certainly the former are described as taking part with the latter in the songs of praise to *the Lamb*. "I heard," says John, "the voice of many angels round about the throne, and their number was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, saying, with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

5. Finally, there is a Being of another order, a Being infinitely exalted above any of those already mentioned, whose attention is deeply engaged by the object presented in the text:—*God himself* is concerned, supremely concerned, in the contemplation of "the Lamb of God." To *Him* the Redeemer is an object, not indeed of *admiration*, since the Divine Being can admire nothing, but of infinite *complacency* and *satisfaction*. On two conspicuous occasions in the ministry of Jesus Christ,—at his baptism and at his transfiguration,—did the Eternal Father proclaim, by a voice from heaven, "*This* is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: *hear Him!*" In every part of revelation we find the Son of God represented by the Father as the object of his dearest, his most intense interest. "Behold," says he, "my servant whom I have chosen! mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth!" "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth take counsel against the Lord, and against his Anointed; He that sitteth in heaven shall laugh them to scorn: then

shall he speak unto them in his wrath, *Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Sion:* be wise, therefore, ye kings; *kiss the Son*, lest he be angry, and ye perish!" In the opening of the Epistle to the Hebrews, we read that "God hath appointed his Son, who is the brightness of his glory, the heir of all things;" and that, "to the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom: and thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands: they shall perish, but *thou* remainest!" It seems as if the *Divine Mind were concentrated*—as if *all the Deity were busied and intent*—in the scene of redemption and the person of the Redeemer! It seems as if the Great Eternal could find no *other* medium in which he might pour out the whole treasury of his perfections,—satisfy his infinite conceptions and desires, display and harmonize all his various attributes—his holiness, his justice, his mercy, and his love,—than Jesus Christ, "the power and the wisdom of God!" Here he shines in his complete and blended glory,—at once the "just God," and the justifying Saviour of him that believeth in Jesus Christ. Here, doubtless, is presented an object the most glorious and delightful in the universe of God! There is reason to believe that, in a *moral* (that is, in the *highest*) point of view, the Redeemer, in the depth of his humiliation, was a *greater* object of attention and approbation, in the eye of his Father, than when he sat in his *original* glory at God's right-hand; the one being his *natural*, the other peculiarly his *moral* elevation.

Encompassed by so great a cloud of witnesses, summoned by so many powerful voices, let us all more earnestly than ever attend to this incomparable object: so shall we be prepared for the trials of life, the agonies of death, the solemnities of the judgment, and the felicities of the eternal world; so shall we *inherit* the unsearchable *treasures of grace and glory.*

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## XIV.

## THE ADVANTAGES OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT CONTRASTED WITH THE BLESSINGS OF THE SPIRITUAL KINGDOM OF JESUS CHRIST.*

2 SAM. vii. 16, 17.—*Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.*

[PREACHED AT BRIDGE-STREET MEETING, BRISTOL, SEPTEMBER, 1822, FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY.]

THESE words, you are aware, are part of the message which the Lord addressed to David by the mouth of Nathan, at the time when

*Printed from the notes of the Rev. Thomas Grinfield

David meditated the raising of a temple to the Lord. He was not indeed permitted to execute that design, but the Lord accepted him "according to all that was in his *heart*;" and commissioned the prophet Nathan to assure him, that his throne and kingdom should be confirmed, without interruption or termination, to his lineal successors, without ever again suffering such an instance of the *departure* of Divine favour as that which had occurred in the removal of the family of Saul from the throne: "*Thy* throne shall be established for ever." This promise was verified to the successors of David in so extraordinary a manner, as compels us to regard their history as an example of the particular intention and interposition of God's providence. The direct line of succession was preserved unbroken (with a single exception, that of Athaliah,* which was of short continuance), in the house of David; and, while the history of the kings of *Israel* (after the separation of the ten tribes under Rehoboam's reign) becomes a subject of some perplexity by perpetual irregularities in the succession, it is remarkable that the kings of *Judah* succeed each other in perfect order, during a period of five hundred years. It is true, that during a long interval,—from the captivity to the incarnation of our blessed Lord,—the throne of Judah, as well as that of Israel, fell into a state of deep decline and depression, so that the traces of its history are almost extinct: yet still the house of David *existed*, it was still *preserved* and *known;* the kingdom was in a state of *abeyance*,—of *suspended*, not *abolished* exercise: and it was *resumed and renewed*, and improved into higher glories in the person of *Jesus Christ*, the true, spiritual, substantial *David;* of *whose* kingdom (it cannot reasonably be doubted by any) that of David himself was at once a *type* and a *part*. The empire of Christ was the *sequel* and *consummation* of that which had originated in the son of Jesse; and hence our Saviour is so often styled the *Son* of *David*. The angel at his nativity announced him as "He who should be great, and should sit upon the throne of his father David, and of whose kingdom there should be no end;" while the evangelists, for the same reason, take pains to convince us that he descended from David by an exact *genealogy*. The *perpetuity* so emphatically promised in the text and many other places to the kingdom of *David* immediately pointed to the everlasting reign of Messiah, to which alone that attribute could strictly belong. Our Saviour inherited this empire, *not* in *consequence* of his essential *divinity*, but of his *incarnation* and his *mediatorial* undertaking. His *divinity*, of which I trust all present are deeply convinced, was a *requisite* indeed, but it was not (properly speaking) the *cause* of his receiving and exercising this spiritual dominion. *Unless* he had been a person of the most Holy Trinity, it is evident he could not have sustained a sovereignty which requires universal knowledge and power: but his *Deity* could not have been the reason of his sustaining it; or else the *Father* and the *Holy Spirit*, being each *Divine*, must have inherited this throne as well as the *Son of God*. If *all* power was committed to him, it was (as he declares) because he was the Son of *Man*.

* 2 Kings chap. xi.

Like the *typical* David, He approached and ascended to his throne through much difficulty and suffering; he had to combat and conquer many and malicious enemies; though, during his ministry on earth, he gathered about him a *few* friends and followers (as David had also done, amid the persecutions of Saul), it was not until he had *risen* from the grave, and was ready to ascend to heaven, that he could use that triumphant language, "*All* power is given unto *Me* in heaven and in earth!" The *commencement* of his reign may be dated from his *resurrection*, or from his *session* at the Father's right-hand: it was *then* the Father said, "Sit thou on my right-hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Ever since that era he has *continued* and *advanced* his empire; and (as the apostle observes), He must go on reigning until "he hath put all enemies under his feet."

In the following remarks, let me request your candid attention,—*first*, to the principal *advantages* to be expected in a well-ordered government *on earth*; and *then* to the *corresponding*, and infinitely more important advantages which may be enjoyed under the *spiritual* government of Jesus Christ.

1. The first and primary advantage expected from every well-constituted human government is *security*, and the *sense* of security. The depravity of our nature has introduced such a universal selfishness and rapacity among mankind in their *natural* state, that men in every age and country have been convinced of the expediency and necessity of attempting to *organize some* form of government for the purpose of their common security. While every individual is left to exert his own power as he chooses, none can be secure either in his property or person: it becomes absolutely indispensable, therefore, if men would escape the *intolerable* evils of such a state, to collect and imbody this scattered and uncertain force of the many, in some *public depositary* of power: such a provision is *necessary* for the protection and preservation of every community. Hence almost *all* nations, even the most uncivilized, have attempted *some* constitution of this kind, however rude, for the prevention or the redress of those injuries to which the subjects were continually liable by the passions of our nature. Where the supreme power is lodged in the person of *one*, the government is called a *monarchy*; where it is reposed in the hands of a *few*, an *aristocracy*; and where the *people* share it in common among themselves, it becomes a *democracy*. Whatever may be the imperfections attaching to each of these *modes* of government, the *worst* is preferable to a state of society *destitute* of public authority and law: in such a state there can exist not only no *security*, but no *tranquillity*; it must be a state of perpetual apprehension and terror, in which none would feel themselves free to pursue either the arts of life or the acquisitions of trade. Even when an individual might *himself* escape for a time the assaults of rapacity, in such a state he would have to endure (what would be perhaps to some a still *greater* evil) the fearful *expectation* of his turn to suffer; and the *nearer* he beheld the acts of outrage, the deeper must be the impression of alarm on his mind, just as (if an humble illustration may be excused) when a stone is thrown

into water, while the agitation is greatest at the spot where it falls the *effect* extends in the circles that are formed around, though it becomes more and more faint as they recede farther from the *centre*.

But the utmost degree of personal *security* that can be enjoyed under any form of civil power is a most imperfect *shadow* of the *safety* which Jesus Christ bestows upon the subjects of his *spiritual* reign. Until a man submits to *His* mediatorial authority, he remains exposed to unutterable evils. He *ought* to feel perpetual anxiety and alarm; for, in the declared judgment of God, he is in a state of *condemnation* and *death:* "he that believeth not in the *Son* of God is condemned *already;*" he that is not "quickened together with Christ Jesus" is "*dead* in trespasses and sins:" he is a criminal under sentence of execution, and only *respited* for a brief and uncertain period; the sword of Divine justice, suspended over him, may fall at any moment, and he is *lost* for ever. This is *certainly* the condition of every unconverted sinner, every one that has not yielded himself a willing subject to Jesus Christ his *Lord*. But "kiss the Son;" yield yourself as such a subject to *Him;* and from that moment you are placed in a state of perfect *security;* you are *saved with a great salvation*, protected from the *wrath* of God, from the *dread* of eternity, from the *misery* of sin; according to the prophet's beautiful description of our Saviour,—"In that day a King shall reign in righteousness; and a Man shall be as a covert from the storm, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." The subjects of Jesus Christ, justified by faith, have *peace* with God. The *last* donation he promised his disciples was peace:—"Peace I leave with you; *my* peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you."—"*My* peace!"—the same peace which filled the bosom of the *eternal* Son of God, when, having finished his work, he was acknowledged by the Father as his "beloved Son in whom he was well pleased." For, "because ye are *sons*, God hath sent forth the Spirit of *His* Son into *your* hearts,"—of His Son, the first-born of many *brethren*. And (as the apostle argues) "if *God* be for us, who shall be against us? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? Shall *God* that justifieth? Who is he that condemneth? *Christ* that *died*, yea, rather that is *risen* for us? Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" The *church* of Christ, as a collective society, is invested with absolute security; it is a city on whose walls is engraven the name, "JEHOVAH SHAMMAH, THE LORD IS THERE!" It stands fast "like Mount Sion that *cannot be moved:*" it is founded on a *Rock*, and that Rock is Christ: He has "all power in heaven and earth" for its preservation; and not "the gates of hell shall prevail against it." But a *portion* of this general security of the *body* belongs to every *member* of it; *every* believer in Christ enjoys the same; and, as he grows in grace and knowledge, he enjoys also the *sense* of this security; he *feels* himself at peace with God; this peace *keeps* and fortifies his heart and mind against every assailing trouble; and, on the most *trying* occasions, he learns to say with humble confidence "I will go forth in the *strength* of the Lord."

2. The second benefit expected from human governments is *liberty*. So far as this advantage is consistent with the former, or with the public *security*, the *more* largely it is enjoyed the *better*. Every *diminution* of liberty, except such as is necessary to our *protection* from evils which might otherwise be apprehended, is itself just so much redundant *evil*. All *wanton*, all merely arbitrary restrictions upon the freedom of individuals are to be regarded as some of the greatest calamities which mankind can sustain from each other; inasmuch as they strike directly at those principles of free thought and action which are the sources of all noble enterprise, energy, and excellence. Restraint, that cannot be justified by the production of some *greater* benefit than could be attained without it, is not imperfection; it is injustice. But, suppose the utmost possible degree of *civil* liberty enjoyed, what is it in comparison with that *spiritual*, *real* freedom which Jesus Christ confers? The former is, at the best, only an *external*, circumstantial blessing; it does not enter into the *inner man*. But "if the *Son* shall make you free, you shall be *free indeed*:" "where the Spirit of the Lord is," *there* is the only true liberty. The Christian is the genuine *freeman*, and none besides is such except in *name*. *His* indeed is a glorious liberty: from the moment he enters into the kingdom of grace and truth, he is loosed out of prison, and leaves his bonds behind; invigorated with a divine strength, he *purposes*, and it *stands fast; he triumphs over himself;* he is victorious over the *world* with all its allurements or afflictions; he tramples upon the greatest *tyrants*, —the *powers* of darkness, the rulers of the disobedient; from that moment he is emancipated from the spirit of bondage; he walks at liberty; he can look beyond the grave; humble and yet *confident*, prostrate and yet *not confounded*, even in the prospect of appearing before *God;* and having overcome all, he "sits down in heavenly places with Jesus Christ,"—even as *He* also, having overcome all by death, sat down in glory at the right-hand of his Father. *This* is a *perfect* liberty: not an evil can be felt or feared but it may be thus removed. *This* is an *immortal*, *everlasting* liberty; a freedom which confers on its possessors the sublime title of "the *sons* and *daughters* of the Lord God Almighty."

3. The next advantage derived from a good government is *plenty*. To secure this advantage, you are aware that there are arrangements in *nature*, in a great measure independent of *human* institutions, and beyond the control of human policy. But perhaps, in this respect, there has been often much error on the part of those in power. In general, it may be asserted that *human* laws should not interfere *too much:* no set of men can be supposed to understand the interests of particular classes *as well* as the individuals concerned understand their own interests. Every one should be left at liberty, as far as possible, to choose his own way in pursuing his own prosperity; and the aggregate prosperity of the nation will be best consulted by allowing the utmost scope to that of every *individual*. The prevailing tendency in every government is, to legislate too much: and here, it may just be remarked, there are two obvious evils to be avoided; those who

legislate should be careful, in the first place, not to lay on too many *impositions;* and secondly, not to introduce any unnecessary *restrictions.* The utmost that human wisdom can achieve must be imperfect, under the best system of government, there must remain many cases of poverty and distress; but in the kingdom of Jesus Christ there exists an *infinite plenty* of all the provisions that can be desired for all the wants of the *soul. None* are neglected here: the *poorest* may be enriched beyond the most splendid opulence of this world, even with "the *unsearchable* riches of Christ;" as the apostles, "though *poor,* could *make many rich,*—though they *had nothing,* they *possessed all things.*" For in Jesus Christ "*all* fulness" dwells, for the supply of spiritual destitution. "Fulness" of *knowledge:* knowledge is the great distinction of the mind,—and here is all *spiritual* knowledge. Christ is himself the *wisdom* of God; to know HIM is to attain at once the highest knowledge; it is to have the Spirit which "searcheth all things, even the *deep* things of God," and ultimately to "*know even as we are known.*" "Fulness" of *holiness:* holiness is the proper riches and beauty of the soul; and the *subjects* of Christ are created anew in holiness after *His* image. "Fulness" of *consolation:* the greatest comforts that ever visited the troubled heart of man are those which flow from Christ as their fountain; it is *He* who has brought to light consolations entirely *new,* such as had never before entered into the *thoughts* of men; and well might he say, "*Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in* ME." "Fulness," once more, as it respects the *inheritance* in reserve;—"*an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away;*" of which the saints have at certain seasons a *present* sense and foretaste, though the light of eternity is required to display its real *extent,*—to display the *accessible* fulness of the *present* Saviour. *These* are *durable* treasures: they can never be taken away from us,—they form part of *ourselves,*—they are carried about with us where we go; no moth corrupts, no thief invades. There can exist no distinction here between the rich and the poor; no room for the frown of pride, or luxurious excess on the *one* side, while we behold despised poverty and pining want on the *other:* all is *equality* and *unity,* the consequence of unlimited *abundance,*—abundance commensurate with all the demands of a perishing universe.

4. A tendency to *improvement* in *its social institutions* is a fourth benefit which ought to accompany every well-ordered government. The best of those institutions are such as will be at once *permanent* and *progressive,* by their intrinsic wisdom and excellence,—by their adaptation to all the varying circumstances of the nation,—by their power of providing for unseen and possible emergencies: they will gradually rise from *security* to convenience, and then exalt convenience into ornament—into just refinement and diffused illumination: such has been the aim of the greatest legislators. Under the scorching climate of *despotism* all the fruits of the mind are withered; a dull monotony prevails in the moral scene; the powers of men, unable to expand, attain only a dwarfish growth: while in a *free* state, where liberty of thought is allowed to all, the faculties and virtues have room

for exercise,—they flourish as in a climate congenial with their nature; and such, on the whole, is eminently the condition of this favoured and distinguished country.

But the difference between the most moral and the most flagitious of *natural* characters is *less* than the difference that subsists between the subjects of *Jesus Christ* and the children of this world; because the latter is the difference between the spiritually *dead* and *living*. "The wisdom of God" is discovered to those only who *believe* in Jesus Christ; all others sit in darkness: for, "after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." We see this verified in all the history of nations. Without pretending to determine how far human reason may proceed *alone*, it may be safely affirmed that the *least instructed* portion of every country in which Christianity is professed possess far juster views of the leading truths of religion,—such as the character of *God*, the nature of *sin*, the obligation of *virtue*, the *eternal* world,—than ever were entertained by the most inquiring pagans. The great *abstractions* of the gospel were never *touched* by *man*,—they remained *shut up in the bosom of Deity;* and there they must have remained for ever, had not *He* disclosed them by Jesus Christ, *the Light of the world.* They surpass the natural mind in its widest excursions, its profoundest researches, its sublimest elevations. Yet *these* are the *vital*, *essential* principles of the soul,—these are the germs of all excellence and happiness,—*these*, wherever they are known, are found to have a purifying and an exalting influence upon mankind,—*these* effectually tend to *moralize* and *beautify* society. The gospel empire possesses in itself *interminable* energies, and *tendencies* to benefit its subjects. No *other* reason can be *assigned* why our *country* and Europe should differ so greatly from the ancient nations, and should so far excel the most cultivated among them, regarded in a moral estimate; no other reason than this, that the *light of Jesus Christ* has shone upon us like a finer Sun—*the* "*Sun of Righteousness.*" All those elysian images of prophecy, which paint with so much beauty the latter days of the world, are nothing, in their substantial fulfilment, but the *impress* of Jesus Christ on the minds and manners of mankind, the image of Christianity imbodied in society, "*the earth filled with the knowledge of the Lord,*" and *righteousness* dwelling in the new-created universe.

5. The fifth and last requisite of a well-constituted government is *stability:* this is the crown of all its other advantages. Nothing can be wanting to *such* a reign but that it should *last;* and this is what the text emphatically expresses,—"*Thy throne shall be established for ever:*" as the Psalmist says of the Messiah, "*He shall reign as long as the sun and moon endure.*" In this the kingdom of David was an emblem, however faint, of that which would be erected by Jesus Christ; wonderfully preserved as was the throne of Judah, while the greatest monarchies were marked by perpetual vicissitudes: the kings of Israel were ever changing in their *line*, while the descendants of David *maintained a direct* succession. No Roman emperor, with the

exception of Vespasian, was followed by his *proper* successor during a hundred and fifty years from the time of Julius Cæsar: they passed and chased one another like *shadows*. *Here*, meanwhile, "in the house of Judah," was a *preternatural* stability, destined as an image (though an imperfect image) of the *fixed*, indestructible empire of *Jesus Christ*. *His* throne has never been shaken for a moment: He has appeared without *a rival in the field*. Who has ever dared to question His pretensions? *who* has dared to challenge a comparison with *Him* in *prophecies*, in *miracles*, in *virtues*, in *doctrines?* Not a doubt has been entertained among competent judges of *His* being the *true* Messiah: all the servants of God have been ready, in reference to His dominion, to adopt the well-known exclamation of an excellent man, "*Esto perpetua!*"* Of *His* kingdom let there be no end. We may truly say, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the world stand up, and the rulers take counsel against the Lord and his Messiah; but *He* shall break their bonds asunder, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." There has appeared on earth no other *universal interest* than this; none which has bound all hearts together as the heart of one man. In minor points we may follow a thousand different paths; but when the question is, whether JESUS CHRIST shall reign,—whether the kingdom of JESUS CHRIST shall be extended,—we are ready to *forget* all our distinctions,—we are all *united*,—we are all *one* man. Not that the stability of His kingdom depends merely on *human* exertions: *God* has staked his character and all his perfections upon its establishment; He has pledged his word and oath for its *success*:—"The jealousy of the Lord of Hosts will *do* this, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

Nothing but the extension of this empire is necessary to change the wilderness into a *paradise*, and exalt the condition of *earth* into a resemblance of *heaven*. And we have reason to hope the destined period is *not* remote: our children's children may live to witness the cessation of wars under the sceptre of the Prince of Peace; to witness the *expectation of eternity and heaven* diffused among all the partakers of our nature. Lend your helping hand to the promotion of such an object. Convert *base* riches, "the mammon of unrighteousness," into the means of imparting *spiritual* treasure, the instrument of conveying "an exceeding and eternal *weight* of glory," into a link, an important link in the chain that connects earth with heaven. You are not called out to endure the burden and heat of the day; you are permitted, while sitting under your vine and fig-tree, to assist, in a way at once *easy* and *effectual*, the diffusion of the privileges and immunities of this heavenly kingdom over the whole world; the recovery of a vast neglected portion of our race to the happy condition of those who are the subjects of Jesus Christ.

* The last words of Paul Sarpi, expressive of his wish for the immortal glory of his country, to whose cause he died a martyr.

## XV.

## THE ENLARGEMENT OF CHRISTIAN BENEVOLENCE.*

2 Cor. vi. 13.—*Now for a recompense in the same (I speak as unto my children), be ye also enlarged.*

[PREACHED FOR THE BAPTIST MISSION, AT BROADMEAD, BRISTOL, AUGUST 6, 1824.]

The Corinthian church was early infested by false teachers, who opposed themselves to the apostle Paul, and, forming their own sects and factions, endeavoured to substitute their corruptions of the faith for his pure and Divine doctrine. To the cure of this disease he had addressed himself in a former, and he pursued the same design in this epistle. In doing this, he found himself compelled, though the humblest of men, to remind the Corinthians of the extraordinary evidences he had given of the most devoted zeal in the cause of Christ, while he adverted to his manifold sacrifices and exertions. In the context he speaks in the affectionate language of a parent appealing to his children: "O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open to you, our heart is enlarged: ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. Now for a recompense in the same (I speak as unto my children), be ye also enlarged." Endeavour (as if he said) to *meet* me upon the same ground of affectionate attachment on which I desire to embrace you in Christ. In discoursing on these words, I propose, for our mutual advantage, first, to *illustrate* in what this enlargement consists, and, secondly, to *enforce* it.

I. With respect to the first point,—in what the enlargement mentioned in the text consists,—let it be remarked, first, that it is *not* to be understood as consisting in expansion of *intellect*, in that kind of mental enlargement which arises from the discoveries of science and philosophy: for this, however ornamental, or however useful it may be, is by no means necessarily connected with a Divine influence on the heart. Nothing can be more familiar to our knowledge or observation than the melancholy instances of those in whose character extreme deficiencies and blemishes of a *moral* kind form a striking contrast to brilliancy of intellect. It is sufficient, in illustration, to remind you of the examples which have been so abundantly furnished by a neighbouring kingdom. Probably, there may exist some *remote tendency* in intellectual enlargement to expand the *heart* in benevolent sensibility; but the connexion is not so close, nor the effect so certain as to justify any great dependence; and those who infer from the improvement of reason a proportionate advancement in virtue wil find their expectation too often frustrated.

There are others who flatter themselves that they possess superio.

* Printed from the notes of the Rev. Thomas Grinfield.

enlargement of soul to most around them, because they entertain an equal indifference to all the vanities of human opinion in religious subjects, and feel no regard for any sect or creed. This would, no doubt, be a very cheap and easy doctrine to embrace: by those who are indifferent, concessions are *easily* made to almost any extent; and there can be no great liberality in sacrificing truth where no real attachment to truth is felt. In the apostle Paul we find the *reverse* of such a character: exactly in proportion as he became attached and devoted to "the truth as it is in Jesus," he exhibited the increase of his real benevolence and self-denying exertions. Genuine enlargement of charity consists in *seeking* the salvation of men,—not in complimenting them with a pretended candour. Nothing can be really more cruel, however varnished with a gloss of liberality, than the attempt to explain away the most clear and awful sanctions of Divine truth, when we are expressly assured, "He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be *damned!*" True spiritual wisdom is shown, not in such a promiscuous confusion of all parts of truth, but in proportioning our regard for every part to its own importance and magnitude.

On the *positive* side of the subject: the Christian enlargement recommended consists in a real benevolence to the *whole* church of Christ, as opposed to any selfish views of *our own* salvation, or of *our own* church, as exclusively concerned. The nearer we approximate to universal love, the higher we ascend in the scale of Christian excellence. There are some, though we would hope the number is small, who live solely to *themselves;* who are so perfectly absorbed in selfishness as to neglect all around them; who regard whatever does not conduce to their own immediate gain or pleasure as so much loss: —the proper sentiment we should entertain towards the spirit these exemplify is that of *supreme contempt.*

Others limit their benevolence to the circle of their own family, or of their acquaintance; these rise above the former, in proportion as they possess more of the enlargement we would illustrate; they mingle their affections with *others*, and identify their happiness with that of those who are most nearly connected with themselves.

Others advance far beyond this: they extend their benevolent interest over a much *wider* circle; they feel for every case of distress, and rejoice in every opportunity of benefit that falls within their view. Their emotions are of the *same kind* with the former, but, taking an ampler range, they proportionably raise the moral character.

But suppose the *whole nation* to be embraced by an individual; suppose him, forgetful of all merely personal or private interests, to devote himself entirely to the public benefit of his country: he holds the scales of justice,—he allays discord, alleviates the wretchedness of want, exposes his very *life* in the service of the state; and in every respect acts under the impression of his forming only a *part* of the *whole.* Here is a far higher order of character; and the reason is, that it has more of the true enlargement recommended by the apostle. And this is the utmost extent of human benevolence, apart from the

divine religion of Jesus Christ. The proud Roman confined all his benevolence to the city of Rome, and regarded the remoter provinces merely as subservient to the wealth and splendour of that enormous capital; while all the world, beyond the limits of the empire, was despised as a mass of despicable *barbarism*. To view the world as one united *whole*,—mankind as one family, all nations as *one blood*,—springing from *one* Father of all, tending to *one* destiny,—this enlargement of heart, however just and natural, never entered into the views, or at least never regulated the conduct, of the most enlightened men in the pagan world.

But suppose us enabled to open our eyes to a comprehensive view of mankind as one vast family; suppose the Divine Being to have clearly discovered himself as the Universal Father, of whom all are alike the children by *nature*, and from whom all have alike departed by *sin*: suppose him to have shown us that all are in the same *lapsed* condition, and that one great method of recovery has been provided for all; that there is one immense society of holy beings, whether men or angels, to which we are all invited by the gospel: what should be the effect of such a revelation, but first to attach us to *God* as our common centre, and then to the whole family of man as called to form the *church of God?*—for, in such a view, we come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly of the saints,—to God, the Judge of all,—to Jesus Christ, the mediator between God and man!

II. In the second place, I proceed to *enforce* this spirit of Christian enlargement, by reminding you of some of its *motives and reasons*.

1. First, this spirit is perfectly *reasonable*, and in harmony with *nature*;—with nature, that is, as the production of God, though not as transformed by *sin*. This enlargement of soul is one of the great lines of demarkation between *man* and the inferior creation—this property of his mind, by which he is capable of considering himself as part of the *whole*,—capable of abstracting and generalizing his ideas, and of forming a conception of contributing to the *moral system*. The more pious, the more truly enlightened men become, the more they feel and cherish this most important sentiment, this *moral abstraction and expansion*. Again, we are evidently so circumstanced in the present world, that we are perpetually and inevitably *led out of ourselves*: it is impossible to lay down any practicable system of conduct which would insulate us from our species, and confine us to *ourselves* entirely. There are several natural emotions of the mind that are purely social and benevolent: such is the sentiment of *pity* or *compassion*, which it is impossible to explain on any other supposition. Pity *identifies* us with others: those who have attempted to resolve it into a *selfish* pleasure as its origin forget that this pleasure itself must be traced to a *previous* concern for distress as its cause. It is absurd to suppose we must *first* feel the pleasure, and *then* exercise the pity; this is to mistake the effect for the cause, and to leave no *basis* for the emotion In all our *social* affections, supposing them *genuine* and not merely *pretended*, we act on the ground of a *disinterested* benevolence; we

make our happiness out of that of *others;* it is *their* happiness, not *our own*, that we primarily seek.

2. Further: this enlargement agrees with the genius of Christianity,—of *that* Divine system under which we profess to be forming our character. For what is Christianity? It is to *believe* in the redemption of the world by *Christ* the Son of God. This is the simplest view of revelation; but *this* is the grand display of the *Divine* benevolence: "*Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son a ransom for us.*" "*God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son,*" &c. It is this *fact* to which your attention is directed; the *fact* alone is stated: those who are not moved by such a fact as this, no conceptions of thought, no eloquence of words, nothing that can be added, can reach their hearts! Such a gift of *God* —such a condescension of *Christ*—speaks *for itself*, or none can speak for it. Hence the apostle declares, "*The love of Christ constrains us,*" bears us along with itself in the *same* direction, impels us towards the *same objects*, *identifies* us with the love of Christ to sinners, and the glory of God in their salvation. Such an example of compassionate benevolence,—of *enlargement* in heart,—once perceived and felt, absorbs the soul. In the spectacle of "God manifested in the flesh," the greatest extremes and contrarieties are united; majesty and meanness the most distant; the highest excellence and the lowest degradation! And the natural effect is to *assimilate* our hearts; the first-fruit of the Spirit of Christ on his apostles was *union*. The earliest disciples began at once to organize themselves into a *body*, all standing fast in one fellowship, all minding the same thing, all drinking of the same Spirit; they gave themselves first to the Lord, and then to each other; they loved one another as *brethren* in Christ Jesus.

In the communion of the saints, such as *theirs*, the rich blessings of the gospel are most deeply enjoyed. At first the apostles, not sufficiently illuminated, retained some remains of their exclusive prejudices, some lingering of that selfishness which is the old plague and epidemical malady of human nature. They aimed at narrowing and monopolizing the gospel within the circle of Jewish proselytes. But, as the Sun of Righteousness rose with increasing brightness upon their minds, they purged off their prejudices, and came early to a perfect compliance with the injunction, "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature:*" they understood and proclaimed that there was "*neither Greek, nor Jew, barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free.*" And the same spirit is realized in proportion as men are Christianized: they live "kindly affectioned one towards another; forbearing and forgiving, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven themselves:" they *feel* that "none of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself." The most eminent saints have been shining examples of this: Moses prayed that he might be *blotted* out of God's book, rather than all the people. The apostle Paul, perhaps, above the whole apostolic college, exhibited the love of his Master imparted to his mind: he could even wish himself *accursed for the sake of his brethren;* he sympathized with every member of the Christian body. "Who is weak, and I am

not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?" &c.; "beside that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

3. This enlarged benevolence may be further enforced by its *aspect on our own happiness.* This, indeed, is a secondary motive,—secondary to the glory of God, the ultimate end of all things, and to the precepts of Christ, the authoritative rule of conduct. We are not to seek our own happiness in any other way than that which is consistent with these: but here it may be truly said, "He that *loves* his life shall lose it, and he that *loses* his life for the gospel shall find it." The more we *imbody* ourselves and our happiness with the interest of *others*—the interests of the *whole*, the more in reality we consult our own happiness. In the pursuit of any merely *solitary* schemes, we shall reap only disappointment: if we attempt to *detach* ourselves from the general mass, to *individualize* ourselves from the community of our species, we shall be *imprisoned* and *pent in.* When the barriers of selfishness are broken down, and the current of benevolence is suffered to flow generously abroad, and circulate far and near around, then we are in a capacity of the greatest and best enjoyment. Happiness must be sought, not so much in a direct as in an indirect way,—the way which has been marked by God and by Jesus Christ. In order to be happy in any high degree, we must *abandon ourselves*, according to his will, and after the pattern of his Son, to the temporal and spiritual benefit of mankind. The apostle was a bright illustration of this: he laid himself out in body and soul,—he spent and was spent for others: filled with the most enlarged views of the glory of God as displayed in the salvation of men,—ravished with the ineffable beauty of redemption,—he was ready to do and suffer all things that might be required in the promotion of such an end; and the prisoner at Philippi and Rome was infinitely happier than Nero on the throne.

Some may suppose an exception must be made in favour of the private exercises of *devotion.* Devotional pleasures may be enjoyed, perhaps, in the highest degree, in retirement; but we may err in extremes even here: we must not be *epicures* even in devotion. It is possible to be so intent upon meditative duties, as to go out of the appointed path of social usefulness, as it stands imbodied in the character of Jesus Christ and his apostles.

Would you escape the corrosions of domestic affliction, beware of concentring your affections within too confined a circle of beloved objects, lest, like Micah, when deprived of his images of worship, you be constrained to cry, "*Ye have taken away my gods.*" Be assured, my brethren, the more you diffuse and multiply yourselves upon a wide surface of benevolence, the better you will be guarded against the afflictions and bereavements of life. The Christian, whose heart is enlarged in love to his brethren, sows a soil that cannot but yield him an abundant produce.

4. Lastly, this expanded benevolence is intimately connected with the *promotion of all public good.* It would be trifling with your attention to show that its influence on our *usefulness* is yet more *direct* than that which it exerts on our *happiness.* There is nothing on which the

present age may be more justly congratulated than its attention to public good. In the duties of *private* devotion, in abstinence, and deadness to the world, our ancestors have often greatly exceeded us: but, from various causes, they manifested much *less* of this enlarged Christian benevolence; they pursued salvation too much as an insulated and a selfish concern. Great care was taken to explain the most vital principles of religion,—to lay well the foundations of the sinner's peace with God,—to build up the believer in all the highest views of Christ and holiness: but a zealous activity in the diffusion of Christianity was reserved to be the distinguishing feature of our own generation of the Church. It is wonderful to reflect that three hundred years have passed since the Protestant reformation, and yet that the establishment of *missions* is, comparatively, an affair of *yesterday;* that now, for the first time, Christians appear to feel the force of the command, "*Go ye into all the world.*" Hence our multitude of Sabbath and national schools; hence the Bible circulated by thousands and by millions; hence the consecrated use of our commercial and naval advantages, to waft to the most retired and unknown corners of the earth, treasures of immensely greater value than any which had ever before been carried abroad, even "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

In conclusion, permit me briefly to suggest to you two or three important modes of attaining this Christian enlargement of heart.

1. In order to its attainment, you must, in the first place, cultivate an acquaintance with God: "*Acquaint thyself with God.*" First, draw near to the *Father*, in that new and living way which he has opened to your approach by the sacrifice of his beloved Son: then will this spirit of benevolence, like an elastic fluid, circulate from your heart to every human being; for "*whoso loveth him that begot, will also love all those that are begotten.*" Once *taste* for yourself that the Lord is gracious, and then go abroad, and, like the apostles, you will find that you "*cannot but speak of what you have seen and heard:*" or, like the woman of Samaria, you will call upon others, "*Come, and see a man who hath told me all things that ever I did; is not this the* CHRIST?" Begin *here:* the acts and exercises of benevolence will prove the natural emanations of this holy fountain.

2. In order to attain this principle, and to improve it, we must exercise ourselves in *prayer* for the Holy Spirit's influence. Spiritual influence from above is the true element of our sanctification; and by *this* alone can our hearts be truly enlarged in love to man. The ointment which Christ received was the *Holy Spirit;* and that sacred unction must descend to the skirts of his clothing—must be diffused among all his followers: then Christians will follow *his* example, who preached the gospel to the *poor*, gave light to the blind, and liberty to the captives; healed the broken-hearted, and proclaimed to all around the redemption of our God.

3. Thirdly, and finally, if you would cultivate an enlarged spirit of love, connect yourself *with great objects* of beneficence. The mind takes a tincture from the objects it pursues. If you engage your attention in the concerns of Christian philanthropy, your mind will be dilated in proportion to your ardour—in the ratio of cause and effect.

The way of extensive benevolence is now opened and prepared by God; and it is become as much the duty of every Christian to assist foreign *missions* as to assist the Christian *ministry* at home. From us, as from the ancient Zion, must the Word of the Lord go forth: the waters of the sanctuary must be diffused by our exertions, until, rising by degrees, they overspread all lands. The only question with every one should be, What can *I* do in the support of this great cause? How can I touch and quicken the springs and movements of that vast machinery which is now in such extended operation? It is a day in which the voice of Providence to all is, "Come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty." The powers of darkness are awake and zealous: Satan seeks to excite his agents to new activity, "in great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time." *Our* duty is to oppose his machinations with the only antagonist force,—to set up the kingdom of Christ against him. This has already been attempted with great success. Missionaries have gone forth (Dr. Carey in particular) in the true spirit of martyrs at the stake: they have deliberately and joyfully gone forth from their country and their home into a perpetual and voluntary exile. *You*, my brethren, are called to *no* such sacrifices: how different the circumstances in which *you* may fulfil this part of your Christian vocation!—*you* have only to sit still, draw from your private store, and distribute a portion of that superfluity with which Providence has blessed you; and thus, while you remain at home, you may touch the wheels of the machine which produces such incalculable good. It is a happy circumstance of the age in which we live, that even filthy lucre may thus be transformed into a means of the most extensive spiritual beneficence. And what equal use can you make of your substance? When life is hastening to its close, the world itself must pass away, with all that it contains; and *true converts* to Christianity are the only portion of its inhabitants that shall emerge from its ruins, and enter into "the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness;" the only portion that shall be gathered together in an eternal and blessed society around the throne of God and of the *Lamb*. The divisions and distinctions of Christians vanish away before such a prospect. The spirit of *missions*, indeed, has proverbially contributed to *harmonize* the church of Christ; and to give signs of the approach of that bright era when the names of sect or party shall no more be heard, but all shall form "one fold under one Shepherd." Finally, remember that you are expected to act as stewards of the manifold gifts of God; that *neutrality* in a cause like this is peculiarly detestable. Remember who has said, "He that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad;" while He has declared, as an immutable axiom, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Remember the apostle's solemn charge, that you "trust not in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;" that you "do good, and be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that you may lay hold on eternal life."

## XVI.

## MARKS OF LOVE TO GOD.*

JOHN v. 42.—*But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.*

[PREACHED AT BRIDGE-STREET, BRISTOL, SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 22, 1824.]

THE persons whom our Lord addressed in these words made a high profession of religion, valued themselves upon their peculiar opportunities of knowing the true God and his will, and proclaimed themselves as the *Israel* and the *temple* of the Lord, while they despised the surrounding pagans as those who were strangers to the Divine law. Yet the self-complacent Pharisees of our Saviour's age were as far from the love of God, he assures them in the text, as any of those who had never heard of his name. In this respect, *many of* "the first were last, and the last first." The rejection of the gospel evinces a hardness of heart which is *decisive* against the character; and, in the case of the Pharisees, it gave ample evidence that they possessed no love of God. Had they really known *God*, as our Lord argues, they would have known *himself* to be sent by God: whereas, in proving the bitter enemies of *Christ*, they proved that they were in a state of enmity against God. By parity of reason, *we*, my brethren, who know God and his Word in the way of Christian profession, ought *not* to take it for granted that we possess the love of God, and are in the way of eternal life: the same self-delusion may overtake *us* also; and similar admonitions may be no less necessary to many present than to the Pharisees of old. Suffer then, my brethren, the word of exhortation, while I invite each individual seriously to consider this subject, with a view to the discovery of his real character.

In proceeding to lay down certain *marks* of grace, let it be premised, that either these marks partake of the *nature* of true religion, or they do *not*. If they *do*, they must be *identified* with it, and here the mark is the *thing:* if they do *not* partake of its nature, some of them may exist as indications where genuine religion is not. It is necessary, then, that we combine a *variety* of particular *signs* of grace: any *one* taken by itself may, or may *not*, exist *without* true religion; but where *many* are combined, no just doubt can remain.

Whether you have the love of God in your soul, presents a most *critical* subject of inquiry; since the love of God will be acknowledged by all to be the great, the essential principle of true religion. The simple question, then, to which I would call your attention, is this,—"Am I, or am I not, a sincere lover of the Author of my being?"

* Printed from the notes of the Rev. Thomas Grinfield. These notes present a valuable example of that species of Mr. Hall's preaching in which, throughout the sermon, he kept pressing the application upon the consciences and hearts of his hearers.

In endeavouring to assist you in the decision of this momentous question, as it respects yourselves,

I. I shall entreat your attention while I suggest a variety of *marks* which indicate love to God; and,

II. Supposing the conviction produced by the statement to be, that you have *not* the love of God, I shall point out the proper *improvement* of such a conviction.

1. In suggesting various marks by which you may ascertain whether you love God or not, I would mention, first, the *general* bent and turn of your *thoughts*, when not under the immediate control of *circumstances;* for *these*, you are aware, give a new and peculiar bias to our thoughts, and stamp them with an impress of their own. There is an infinite variety of thoughts continually passing through the mind of every individual: of these, some are thrown up by *occasions;* but others, and often the greater part, follow the *habitual train* of our associations. It is not to thoughts of the *former* kind that I refer; it is to those of the latter class,—those *voluntary* thoughts which spring up of *themselves* in the mind of every person: it is *these*, not the former, that afford clear indication of the *general temper and disposition*. The question I would propose to you is, What is the bent of your thoughts, when, disengaged from the influence of any particular occurrence, you are left *to yourselves*, in the intervals of retirement and tranquillity, in the silence of the midnight watches, and, in short, whenever your mind is left free to its own spontaneous musings? Are the thoughts most familiar to your mind, at such times, thoughts of God and the things of God; or are they thoughts that turn upon the present world and its transient concerns? Are they confined, for the most part, within the narrow circle of time and sense; or do they make frequent and large excursions into the spiritual and eternal world? The answer to *this* question will go far to decide whether you have, or have *not*, the love of God. It is impossible that such an object as the Divine Being should be absent long from your thoughts; impossible that *his* remembrance should long remain *merged* in the stream of other imaginations; unless you are supposed chargeable with a *decided indifference* to divine things! Unless you are destitute of love to God, you can never be so utterly uncongenial in sentiment and feeling with the Psalmist, when he says, "My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, while I meditate upon thee in the night-watches:" "How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God!" When that man of God gazed upon the starry heavens, his mind was not merely engaged with astonishment at the *physical energy* there displayed; he was still more deeply lost in grateful admiration of the mercy of Providence as manifested to *man;* a sinful child of dust, and yet visited by God in the midst of so magnificent a universe! But when day passes after day, and night after night, without any serious thoughts of God, it is plain that He is not the *home* of your mind, not your *portion*, *centre*, and *resting-place:* and, if this is the case, it is equally plain that you are not in a state of acceptance with Him; since nothing can be more certain than that, *as* our thoughts are, *such* must be our

*character.* I do not ask what are your thoughts at particular *times*, or under the effect of some particular *event:* there may be little difference, on *some* occasions, between those who remember, and those who neglect God, *habitually.* The charge against the ungodly is, that "God is not in *all* their thoughts." If there are any here who feel this charge as bearing against *themselves*, let them take that solemn warning given by himself at the close of the fiftieth Psalm: "Oh consider this, ye that *forget* God, lest I *tear* you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you!"

2. Let me request you to consider seriously how you stand disposed to the *exercises of religion.* If God is the object of your love, you will gladly avail yourselves of the most favourable opportunities of cultivating a closer friendship with the Father of your spirits: on the contrary, he who feels no regard for these opportunities proves that he has no love to God, and will never be able to establish the conviction that God is his friend. Wherever there exists a sincere friendship, opportunities of cultivating it are gladly embraced, and the opposite privations are regretted. Where an *habitual neglect* of sacred exercises prevails, it must be interpreted as if it said, like those whom the prophet describes, "Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from among us. Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways!" If your closets seldom witness your private devotions, if your moments in retirement are languid and uninteresting, your religion can have no hold on your heart; and the reason why your religion has no hold on your heart is because you have no love of God. There are some whose religion sits easy and delightful upon them; its acts and functions are free and lively: there are others who seem to bear their religion as a burden, to drag their duties as a *chain*, as *no vital part of themselves*, but rather a cumbrous *appendage:* this is a decisive and melancholy symptom of a heart alienated from God. There is no genuine religion, no real *contact* of the heart with the best of beings, unless it makes us continually resort to Him as our *chief joy.* The Psalmist is always expressing his fervent desires after God; after the light of the Divine countenance, and the sense of the Divine favour: but do you *suppose* such desires *peculiar* to the state of believers under the *Old* Testament? *No*, my brethren; there exists more abundant reasons than ever, since the gospel of Christ has been displayed in all the glorious fulness of its blessings, why our souls should be inflamed with such feelings as those which inspired the Psalmist, when he exclaimed, "As the hart panteth for the water brooks, so longeth my soul after thee, O God!"

3. If you would ascertain whether you love God, consider how you stand affected towards the *Word* of God. We can entertain no just thoughts of God, but such as we derive from his own Word: we can acquire no true knowledge of God, nor cherish any suitable affections towards him, unless they are such as his own revelation authorizes. Otherwise we must suppose that revelation insufficient for its specific purposes, and set the *means* against the *end.* All, therefore, who sincerely love God, are *students* of his Word; they here, also, accord in

soul with the Psalmist, and, like him, can say, "O how I *love* thy Word! in it is my meditation all the day:" they *eat* it as food for their souls, and find it *sweeter than honey*. They go to it as to an inexhaustible fountain, and drink from it streams of sacred light and joy A neglected Bible is too unambiguous a sign of an unsanctified heart; since that blessed book cannot fail to attract every one that loves its Divine Author. How is it possible to delight in God, and yet neglect *that* Word which alone reveals him in his true and glorious character, —alone discovers the way by which he comes into unison with us, and condescends to pardon us, to love us, and to guide us through all this mysterious state of being? It is observable, that the *only* persons who are inattentive to their own sacred books are to be found among *Christians*. *Mohammedans* commit large portions of the Koran to memory; the *Jews* regard the Old Testament with reverence; the *Hindoo bramins* are enthusiastically attached to their Shaster; while *Christians* alone neglect their Bible. And the reason is, that the *Scriptures* are so much more spiritual than the religious books received by others: they afford so little scope for mere amusement or self-complacency; they place the reader *alone with God*,—they withdraw him from the things that are seen and temporal, and fix him among the things that are unseen and eternal,—they disclose to his view at once the secret evils of his own condition, and the awful purity of *that* Being with whom he has to do. No wonder the *ungodly* man hates their light, neither comes to their light, but retires from it farther and farther into the *shades* of guilty ignorance. How melancholy the infatuation of such a character!

4. Estimate your character in respect to your love of God, by reflecting with what sentiments you regard the *people* of God. God has a people peculiarly his own: they are *not* of that world to which they outwardly belong,—not conformed to it in the spirit of their mind; they stand apart, many of them at least, in conspicuous conformity to Jesus Christ, and earnest expectation of the glory which He has promised. How then do you regard these decided followers of God? Do you shun their society with aversion and secret shame; or do you enjoy their communion as one of the most delightful among your Christian privileges? Are you content merely to be the companion of those who "have a *name* to live, but are dead;" or can you say with the Psalmist, "My delight is in the excellent of the earth?" or with the beloved disciple, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren?" for, as he adds, "He that loveth him that begot, loveth him that is begotten:" if you do not love the *image* which you have *seen*, how can you love the *unseen* original? If the features of holiness and grace in the *creature* are not attractive to your view, how can your affections rise to the perfect *essence?* How can you ascend to the very *Sun* itself, when you cannot enjoy even the faint *reflection* of its glory? He who knew the *heart*, could alone say to those around him, "I *know you*, that ye have not the love of God in you:" but though none can address you now in the same tone of Divine authority, yet you may hear it uttered by a voice within, the voice of your own conscience: you may know, without any perturba-

tions of hope or fear, by the spiritual insensibility and inaction of your soul,—by *this* you may know, with equal certainty as by a voice from heaven, that *you have not the love of God in you!*

5. Consider the disposition you entertain towards the person and office of the *Son of God.* "If ye had loved the Father, ye would have loved me also," was the constant argument of Jesus Christ to those Pharisees whom he addresses in the text. For Jesus Christ is the express *image* of God: the effulgence of the Divine character is attempered in *him*, to suit the view of sinful humanity. In the life of Jesus Christ, we see how the Divine Being *conducts himself* in human form and in our own circumstances: we behold how he bears all the sorrows, and passes through all the temptations of flesh and blood. Such, indeed, is the identity, so perfect the *oneness* of character between the *man Christ Jesus* and the *Divine* Being, that our Saviour expressly assures us, "He that hath seen *me* hath seen the *Father;* I and my Father are *one.*" The purpose for which God was manifested in the flesh was, *not* to reveal high speculations concerning the nature of the Deity: it was to *bear* our sorrows, and to *die* for our sins. But can *you* contemplate Him, thus stooping to your condition, thus *mingling* with every interest of *your own*, and not be *moved* by such a spectacle? not be *attracted, fixed,* filled with grateful astonishment and devotion,—crucified, as it were, on the cross of Christ, to the flesh, and to the world? What mark, then, of our possessing no love of *God* can equal this, that we are without love to *Jesus Christ?*—that neither the *visibility* of his Divine excellence, nor his *participation* of all our human sufferings, can reach our hearts and command our affections?

6. In examining whether you love God, examine how you are affected by his *benefits. These* are so numerous and so distinguished, that they ought to excite our most ardent gratitude: night and day they are experienced by us; they pervade every moment of our being We know that favours from an *enemy* derive a *taint* from the hands through which they are received, and excite alienation rather than attachment: but the kindness of a *friend*, by constantly reminding us of himself, endears that friend more and more to our hearts; and thus, he that has no love to God receives all his favours without the least attraction towards their Author, whom he regards rather as his enemy than his friend. But the Christian feels his love of God excited by every fresh instance of his goodness. The mercies of God have accompanied you through every stage of your journey; and they are exhibited to you in his Word as stretching through a vast eternity. Are *these* the *only* benefits you can receive without gratitude, and suffer to pass unregarded? *How*, then, can any love of God dwell in your bosom?

7. Consider, in the next place, in what manner you are impressed by the sense of your *sins.* The question is *not* whether you *have* any sins,—none can admit a doubt on this point; the *only* inquiry is, *how* you are affected by those sins? Are they remembered by you with a sentiment of *tender regret,* of *deep confusion and humiliation,* that you should ever have *so* requited such infinite goodness? And is this sentiment combined with a *sacred resolution to go and sin no more,*—to *devote* yourself to the service of your Divine Benefactor? If you can

live without an habitual sense of penitential tenderness and reverential fear, be assured you cannot love God; you have no experience of those Scripture declarations—"They shall FEAR the Lord and his goodness in the latter days:" "There is mercy with thee, that thou mayest be FEARED:" you know not yet that "the goodness of God leadeth to repentance." If the mind is softened by the love of God, all his favours serve to inflame its gratitude, and confirm its devotion to his will: but he who has no love of God in his soul thinks of nothing but how he may *escape* from God's hand, and selfishly devours all his favours without an emotion of gratitude to the Giver.

8. Finally, let me remind you to consider how you are affected to the *present world*. If you could only be exempt from its afflictions, would you wish it to be your *lasting* home? If you could surround yourself with all its advantages and enjoyments, would you be content to dwell in it for ever? Yet you *know* that it is a place of separation and exile from the Divine Majesty; that it is a scene of darkness, in comparison with heaven, very faintly illuminated with the beams of his distant glory; that its inhabitant is constrained to say, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but mine eye hath *not* yet *seen* thee;" while *heaven* is the proper dwelling-place of God and his people! Could you then consent to remain here always, without ever *seeing as you are seen*,—*seeing light in his light*,—without ever *beholding his glory;* without ever drinking at the fountain, and basking in *that presence which is fulness of joy, and life for evermore!* always to remain *immersed* in the shadows of time—entombed in its corruptible possessions! *never* to ascend up on high to God and Christ and the glories of the eternal world! If such is the state of your spirit, you want the essential principle of a Christian,—you want the love of God. The genuine Christian, the lover of God, is certain to feel himself a "stranger on the earth." No splendour, no emolument of this world,—not all the fascinations of sensual pleasure,—can detain his heart below the skies, or keep him from sympathizing with the sentiment of the Psalmist: "As for me I shall behold thy face in righteousness; and when I awake in thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it." I do not ask whether you have, at present, "a desire to depart:" perhaps you may not be as yet sufficiently prepared and established to entertain so exalted a desire; but still, if you have received a *new* heart, you will deprecate nothing so much as having your portion in *this* life,—as having your eternal abode on *earth*. It is the character of faith to dwell much in eternity: the apostle says, in the name of all real believers, "We look not at the things that are seen, but the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal."

II. And now, my brethren, supposing the preceding remarks to have produced in any of you the conviction *that you have not the love of God in you*, permit me very briefly to point out the proper *improvement* of such a conviction.

1. First, it should be accompanied with deep *humiliation*. If you laboured under the privation of some bodily organ, requisite to the

discharge of an animal function, you would feel it as in some degree a humiliating circumstance; but what would be any defect of this kind, however serious, in comparison with that *great want* under which you labour—the want of piety, the calamity of *a soul estranged from the love of God!* What are all other subjects of humiliation, compared with *this*—a *moral fall*, a *spiritual death in sin:* and this, unless it be removed, the sure precursor of the *second death—eternal ruin!* "This is a lamentation indeed, and it shall be for a lamentation."

Suppose the children of a family, reared and provided for by the most affectionate of parents, to rise up in rebellion against their father, and cast off all the feelings of filial tenderness and respect; would any qualities those children might possess, any *appearances* of virtue they might exhibit in other respects, compensate for such an unnatural, such an awful deformity of character? Transfer this representation to your conduct in relation to God: "If I," says he, "am a *father*, where is my fear? if I am a *master*, where is my honour?" "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me: the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

2. And let your humiliation be accompanied with *concern and alarm.* To be alienated from the Great Origin of being,—to be severed, or to sever yourself, from the essential Author and element of all felicity, must be a calamity which none can understand, and infinite wo which none can measure or conceive! If the stream is cut off from the fountain, it soon ceases to flow, and its waters are dissipated in the air: and if the soul is cut off from *God*, it *dies!* Its *vital contact* with God,—its spiritual *union* with the Father of spirits through the blessed Mediator, is the only life and beauty of the immortal soul. All, without this, are *dead*—"dead in trespasses and sins." A living death—a state of restless wanderings and unsatisfied desires! What a condition theirs! And, oh! what a *prospect* for such, when they look beyond this world! *Who* will give them a welcome when they enter an eternal state? What reception will they meet with, and where? What consolation amid their loss and their sufferings, but that of the fellow-sufferers plunged in the same abyss of ruin? Impenitent sinners are *allied* to evil spirits; they have an *affinity* with the kingdom of darkness; and, when they die, they are emphatically said to "*go to* THEIR OWN *place!*"

3. This is an *awful* state for any to be in at present; but, blessed be God, it is not yet a *hopeless* situation. Let no person say, "I find by what I have heard that I do not love God, and therefore I can entertain no hope." There is a way of return and recovery open to all. Jesus Christ, my dear brethren, proclaims to you all, "I am the way. No man can come to the Father but by me:" but every one that will may come by this new and living way: and, if you lose life eternal, you lose it because,—according to his words just before the text,—because "you *will* not come to Christ that you may have life." If you feel the misery, deformity, and danger of your state, then listen

to his invitation, and embrace his promise. See the whole weight of your guilt transferred to his cross! See how God can be at once the just and the justifier! Take of the blood of sprinkling, and be at peace! *His blood cleanseth from all sin:* He will send *that* Spirit into your heart which will manifest him to you; and where that Spirit is, *there* is *liberty* and holy love. *He* is the *mystical* ladder, let down from heaven to earth, on which angels are continually ascending and descending, in token of an alliance established between God and man. United by faith to Jesus Christ, you shall become *a habitation of God through the Spirit:* the Father will make you a partaker of his *love*, the Son of his *grace*, angels of their *friendship;* and you shall be preserved, and progressively sanctified; until, by the last change, all remains of the grand epidemic source of evils shall be for ever removed from your soul; and the *love of God shall constitute your eternal felicity.*

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## XVII.

### THE JOY OF ANGELS OVER A REPENTING SINNER.*

LUKE XV. 7.—*I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety-and-nine just persons which need no repentance.*

[PREACHED AT BROADMEAD, BRISTOL, SUNDAY EVENING, AUGUST 22, 1824.]

THE ministry of our Lord was exercised, and his success obtained, principally among the lower classes of mankind. We read that, in opposition to the supercilious contempt of the Pharisees and rulers, "the common people heard him gladly:" the ancient prediction being thus verified, that "to the poor the gospel should be preached." Accordingly, Jesus Christ, adapting the style of his preaching to the state of his hearers, borrowed many familiar illustrations of the truths he taught from the scenes of nature and from the occupations of ordinary life, and generally used the parabolic mode of instruction: yet his illustrations were always delivered in a manner consistent with the dignity of his doctrine and character, and they tended to show that his religion is perfectly adapted to make all mankind wise unto salvation.

The proud Pharisees took offence at this attention of our Saviour to the common people, and urged it as an objection against him that he received sinners and ate with them. Our Saviour replied to their objection by supposing the case of a shepherd who, if he had lost a single sheep of his flock, would immediately leave all the rest, that he might recover that *one;* and, having recovered it, would feel a greater degree of satisfaction than the possession of all the rest could bestow.

* Printed from the notes of the Rev. Thomas Grinfield.

After this comparison, our Lord descended to another yet more humble, which could have occurred to no person that was not more conversant with cottages than courts; the comparison of the poor woman that, on the recovery of one lost piece of silver, would be filled with a joy which she could not forbear inviting her neighbours to participate. From these familiar images Jesus Christ lifts our imagination at once to heaven itself; assuring us that, in a similar manner, "Joy shall be in heaven, joy among the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth," and this a "greater joy than over ninety-and-nine just persons who need no repentance."

In endeavouring to unfold this passage for our mutual advantage, I propose to consider, briefly, the four following subjects of inquiry: first, where we are to look for these ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance; secondly, why the event of one sinner's repentance should fill the angels with joy; thirdly, why this joy should be greater than that with which they contemplate so large a number of righteous persons; and, fourthly, why the seat of this should be placed in heaven; after which, in the last place, I shall conclude with a brief improvement.

1. The first point of inquiry is, Where are we to find these ninety nine just persons who need no repentance? The forerunner of Jesus Christ came preaching the doctrine of repentance; and Jesus Christ himself repeated that doctrine, saying to all, "Except ye repent, ye shall perish." When he sent forth his apostles, he taught them to circulate, wherever they went, the solemn admonition, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is come unto you." They constantly inculcated repentance as universally necessary: "Now," said they, "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent." Yet the text makes mention of ninety-nine persons who *need no* repentance. Where then are we to find these? Two solutions have been proposed; each in itself appears satisfactory, but each must be taken separately; proceeding on different grounds, they are not capable of being combined.

First, the persons concerned have been supposed to be persons who have already repented. Divines are accustomed to divide all persons into three states of character,—as careless sinners, awakened penitents, or confirmed believers. The persons in question, who need no repentance, are supposed to have passed through the two former of these states of character, and to be now in the third: they are neither careless sinners nor penitents newly awakened to a sense of guilt—they are confirmed believers; and they need no repentance, no entire change of their hearts, simply because they have already experienced it: as the apostle exhorts the Hebrews, they *go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance.* It is not intended to convey an idea that they have not daily sins to call for daily penitence, but merely that, having once been effectually convinced of sin, and converted to God by a true repentance, they may justly be said not to need that change any more. There is nothing unnatural or improper in this interpretation: there are many such persons, it is to be hoped,

in every Christian society; many who, having passed through that mysterious and vital process of Divine influence on the soul which we call repentance, cannot, strictly speaking, experience or require it a second time.

The other solution is, that Jesus Christ is here speaking hypothetically; that he makes a supposition which has no existence in reality, merely for the sake of argument. No doubt many instances of such suppositions occur in the discourses of our Saviour. It is a mode of statement which exactly concurs with another part of the parables contained in the same chapter: I refer to the character of the elder son. Is there any individual to be found, either in the Christian profession or in civil life, who exhibits the archetype of that elder son?—any one to whom the Father could with propriety say, "Son, thou hast been always with me, and all that I have is thine?" I am aware that the conduct of the Pharisees has been generally considered to be represented by that of the elder son: this is true; yet it is evident the Pharisees are here represented not such as they really were, but such as they vainly imagined themselves to be. In strict reality nothing could be more unlike than the original and the picture; our Saviour gave them credit for their pretensions to righteousness; but nothing could be more remote from the real character of those before whom even *the publicans and harlots* would enter into the kingdom of heaven. After the same manner of speaking, it has been supposed, Jesus Christ here introduces the idea of ninety-nine righteous persons: no real persons were designed by the expression; he used it merely for the purpose of assailing the arrogant conclusions of the Pharisees respecting themselves: supposing them to be of such a faultless character, still, argues our Lord, the spectacle of one penitent sinner would inspire greater joy in the hearts of heavenly beings than the spectacle of ninety-nine such persons.

2. The second inquiry is, Why this spectacle should have such an effect on heavenly beings, and particularly on angels? One might have thought it more probable that no event on earth, at least none in which one individual alone was concerned, would have any effect on beings of so elevated an order; that such an occurrence would not even be known in the celestial court; still less that it would occasion an increase of joy in those abodes of eternal blessedness. But revelation has withdrawn the vail from the invisible world, and opened a communication between earth and heaven. It exhibits to us a race of holy and glorious beings denominated angels; and these are represented as instruments employed in executing the Divine purposes respecting man; they are Christ's angels; they take a deep concern in the success of his church, and the gathering in of his redeemed: Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them that are heirs of salvation? In one passage, indeed, though somewhat obscure, the apostle Paul seems to insinuate that angels are invisibly present in the solemn assemblies of the faithful.* Though their interference in the affairs of the church is now silent and unperceived, there is no reason to sup-

* 1 Cor xi. 10.

pose it to be withdrawn, or less real than when it used to be accompanied with the splendour of miraculous circumstances; any more than there is reason to believe those infernal spirits, against whose temptations we are so often warned, to be now no longer awake and active against us. Heavenly beings are witnesses of these assemblies; they listen to the ministry of sacred truth; they anxiously trace its effects on the consciences and hearts of men; and whenever a salutary impression is produced, whenever the conscience is convinced, and the heart opened to repentance, they bear the glad tidings to their companions in felicity, and *then is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.* Do you ask, why they are thus rejoiced by such an event? For the same reasons, I reply, that the most pious among men are accustomed to rejoice when they hear of the conversion of a sinner to God. Such a change brings, they are sensible, a new servant to their Lord; it is the accession of a new member to that great society of which God and his Christ are the head: and none can be a real, loyal subject of the King of kings without wishing his laws to be obeyed, his kingdom to be extended; because the glory of the Redeemer is realized in the multitude of the redeemed. Besides which, the benevolence of angels is proportioned to their elevation in wisdom and holiness: they approximate, far nearer than the most exalted of the saints, to the unlimited benevolence of the Divine character. God is love, and angels are emanations of that Divine Spirit: no taint of selfishness mingles with their feelings and their views: they see distinctly the connexion that subsists between repentance and happiness: they see that when the sinner repents he first *comes to himself*—he takes the first step in that progress which tends towards their own ineffable felicity—he enters on that way in which God is to be found: while impenitence endangers the eternal welfare of the soul, threatens its forfeiture of immortal happiness, its subjection to irreparable misery. It cannot be but that the repentance of a sinner, regarded as it is by angels as the birthday of a new existence, the precursor of immortality, the embryo of endless bliss, the introduction to the element of perfect peace and rest, the vestibule of heaven,—it cannot but be that this should communicate delight to those holy and benevolent spirits.

The Scriptures clearly reveal to us, whether or not you believe the doctrine, that there exist in this world two great kingdoms; at the head of one of which kingdoms is Jesus Christ, at the head of the other Satan; and that all mankind, without exception, are the subjects either of the one or the other of these mighty opposite empires. Now, repentance is the line of demarkation between the two; it is that which marks the confines of light and darkness,—of the heavenly and the infernal state. From the moment a sinner repents he makes a transition from death to life, spiritual and eternal: from that moment Satan loses a vassal, and Jesus Christ gains a servant. It is impossible for beings such as angels to remain indifferent spectators of such an event; impossible for them not to feel joy when they see the balance changed in favour of their own cause. Victory and gain in every instance are attended with feelings of joy; but no spoil can be deemed precious, no

deliverance worthy of triumph and exultation, in comparison with that which is achieved when repentance finds place in the heart of a human being!

3. In the third place, it is natural to ask, Why the joy entertained by angels, on occasion of a single penitent's recovery, should be greater than the joy they derive from the spectacle of ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance? It must be confessed that the amount of good enjoyed by the ninety-nine righteous persons is intrinsically greater than that which can be supposed to be enjoyed by a single penitent. Theirs, besides its being diffused among ninety-nine persons, is a confirmed and advanced state of happiness; whereas his is merely the first commencement, the embryo of happiness, and this merely in one individual. *How* then, it may be asked, can the degree of joy excited in the breasts of angels by the repentance of a single sinner be justly represented as greater than that which is excited by the view of ninety-nine persons who continue to enjoy a state of far more established and exalted felicity? In answer to this, let it be observed, that, in all probability it is the prerogative of the Deity alone to be affected by things according to their real, absolute magnitude and importance, without the smallest regard to the circumstance of time, without receiving any deeper impression from an occurrence because it is of recent date; it is probable that it is only in His infinite intellect that all things appear in their essential nature, without the difference of impression which arises to our minds from an event being more or less distant in respect to time: "a thousand years are as one day, and one day is as a thousand years, with the Lord;" *His* mind being omnipresent in immensity, and grasping all things as in a point. But beings whose perceptions are progressive, as the perceptions of all finite beings must be, are necessarily more powerfully influenced by a recent event than by one that has long passed; for a time it occupies and engrosses their whole attention, and swells upon their view far beyond its natural dimensions. Now, angels are finite beings; they are affected as such in their sensations by the proximity and distance of objects; and if they are thus affected in their sensations, they must be similarly influenced in their sympathies, since proportionate sympathies always follow sensations.

The penitent sinner has entered upon a new existence,—he has commenced an entirely new course of feeling, thought, and action; and he is yet, when he ceases to be a penitent, to pass into a new and more advanced character of one who delights in God. Angels are affected, like ourselves, by the extraordinary and astonishing change that has taken place. They behold one who has made an eternal transition from death unto life—one who has turned his back on the kingdom of darkness for ever, and set his face towards the light of God; who has begun his march from the land of his captivity towards the heavenly Canaan; who has chosen God for his portion, Christ for his Lord, saints and angels for his friends and society; who is *come to Mount Sion, the city of the living God*, to their own society and that of the redeemed—to the presence of God! He has obtained a new mind, a

new heart; which, instead of being *a nest of vipers, a cage of unclear birds*, is become *a temple of the Holy Spirit*, filled with divine inspirations and acceptable devotions! Can we wonder that such a change should deeply affect the highest order of finite minds, and cause the angels of God to exclaim with rapture, *This, our brother, was dead and is alive; he was lost, and is found?* If all are unrighteous,—if all are by nature dead in sin and condemnation,—if there is no escape without repentance,—then repentance must be of all things the most essential to a sinner: and such it is expressly declared by Him who said, *Except ye repent, ye shall all perish!*

But why, you ask, is the joy greater for the repentance of one sinner than for the perseverance of ninety-nine saints? The ninety-nine righteous persons only stand where they stood before; they only go on in the same path of life in which they had long walked; the only change they can experience is an accretion, an augmentation of the principles and blessings in which they were already confirmed; there is no abrupt and surprising revolution, no essential change: but the first conversion of a sinner to God is an event never to be forgotten; it is an era in eternity, it is registered in heaven!

4. The fourth and last point of inquiry is, the reason why Christ places the scene of this joy in heaven. The repentance of a sinner is a subject of joy on earth; of joy to the faithful minister who has been perhaps the honoured instrument of producing the change: as the apostle Paul, addressing the converts of his ministry, says, "What is our joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of the Lord?" Or, as the beloved disciple says, "I have no greater joy than to see my children walk in the truth." There is joy in the Christian church on every accession of new converts: these, if genuine, constitute the true adornment of every Christian society; in these its real prosperity consists; and melancholy is the state of that church, however externally prosperous, which does not value and desire the increase of its sincere penitents far above every other sign of its prosperity! But when it is said that *there is joy in heaven over every repenting sinner*, the assertion is to be understood in a meaning far more just and adequate. Repentance is there weighed in other scales than here. Angels view the change that is effected in a sinner's position before God, by repentance, from higher ground,—in all its aspects and dimensions, in all its bearings and consequences. They appreciate the greatness of that happiness which their fallen brethren have lost for ever, which they themselves enjoy, and which is now in reserve for the converted sinner. They taste the joy which is set before him; they dwell in the glory which is become the object of his desires; they *know* that whatever may be his present sufferings, they are light and merely for a moment,—they will ere long be exchanged for unspeakable pleasures,—he will have *all his tears wiped away* by God himself! Angels penetrate far deeper than it is in the power of the most exalted saints on earth to penetrate; *the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths* of that eternity which is the seal and crown of the felicity promised to every real penitent, which *stamps* it an eterna.

felicity,—even *eternal life, the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.* They have long been engaged in contemplating the beauty of that holiness which dwells in God as its original; they have long enjoyed him as their portion, as their all; they have been exploring the true fountain of happiness through a long succession of ages, and they find it still as fresh and inexhaustible as ever; they have long basked in the beatific splendours of uncreated light! They comprehend the mysterious and undefinable value of the soul; its intense susceptibilities as a rational, moral, accountable substance, incapable alike of extinction and unconsciousness through infinite duration: these things are clear to their view; but they are obscure and confused to us, who *are of yesterday, and know nothing,*—to us, who are *crushed before the moth.*

5. In the last place, let me attempt a brief improvement of the subject which has now been presented. And, first, we may hence perceive the very great dignity and importance which attaches to the Christian ministry. This is, beyond all doubt, the highest, the most sublime and sacred employment in which the sons of men can be engaged. Its greatness, however, arises not from any circumstances of a secular kind, not from any worldly splendour, but from its purely spiritual character,—from its immediate bearing on human salvation. That salvation, in all its parts, is entirely the work and gift of God; but in this, as in his other works, he employs created instruments; and the chief instruments by whose medium salvation is communicated,—by whose operation the great change of repentance and conversion is effected,—are the ministers of the gospel. The object they habitually have in view, as preachers of the Word, is to persuade men to lay down the arms of their unnatural and guilty rebellion, and enter into the covenant of a merciful God: they stand as the commissioned *ambassadors of Christ:* their ministry is expressly a ministry of repentance and reconciliation *through the blood of the cross;* and it is powerful, in every instance, either as *a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death.* It is an awful reflection, that *if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost;* that we are called *a sweet savour of Christ unto God, in them that are saved and in them that perish!* It may well make us ready to sink under the weight of our responsibility, while we exclaim with the apostle, *Who is sufficient for these things?* Oh, how anxious should this reflection make us, to whom this ministry is committed, that the blood of immortal souls may not be charged against us; since the word we deliver cannot return void to Him that sent it, but must accomplish, in every case, its destined purpose; issuing either in the accumulation of guilt, or the increase of grace, to every one who hears it! And repentance, let it be remembered, necessary as it is to salvation, is taught alone by the gospel; it is only to be learned in the school of Christ. Philosophy knew nothing of repentance towards God, any more than of faith in Jesus Christ: it excited no salutary alarm in the conscience; it opened no view of the terrors of a righteous God. It is the gospel that has first done this; it has awakened a fear which becomes its own cure, and has first

taught the sinner to cry out, *What shall I do to be saved?* The gospel has withdrawn the dark vail of nature's ignorance which hid God from our view, at the same time that it has *brought life and immortality to light in Jesus Christ!* If it fail to lead you to repentance, it fails of every thing for which it was designed; when *He* who had *the keys of death and hell* in his hand could employ no stronger motive to repentance than that which he employs in assuring us, *If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall* DIE IN YOUR SINS!—*Ye shall* DIE IN YOUR SINS! But Jesus Christ, my brethren, came expressly to save you from this dreadful destiny; he came down from heaven to *give life unto the world;* to quicken those that were *dead in trespasses and sins;* and He is now *exalted as a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance as well as remission of sins;* a repentance unto life, never to be repented of! There is enough here, surely, to awaken both your fear and your gratitude; to excite both a sense of the value of your soul, and a sense of the love of your Saviour. And these are motives peculiar to the gospel: to these motives it owes all its triumphs over the hearts of men: it is the gospel of your salvation; and well might it be ushered into the world by angelic beings with that annunciation, *Glory to God in the highest! Peace on earth! Good-will towards men!*

(2.) In the second and last place, it is not necessary to produce motives to repentance from the Scriptures; the text alone is sufficient to show its importance: the simple fact recorded in the text is itself equivalent to a host of arguments—the fact that the only, or at least the chief, event on earth which excites joy in heaven, in the mind of God and of the holy angels, is—the repentance of a sinner! The barrier that separates eternity from time is impassable; the world beyond the grave is enveloped in utter obscurity. Had not revelation broken the silence of nature, never should we have known that a single event which takes place in the present scene is noticed in heaven: but now we are informed that there are occurrences on earth which excite deep attention and emotion in that higher world: and what are these? We are assured by the text that it is not the advancement of knowledge and civilization, not the splendours of art, nor the extension of empires and commerce, that attract the regard of those celestial intelligences; they are interested by objects of a very different description; they *rejoice over one sinner that repenteth!* The repentance of one solitary sinner, his conversion from the error of his way, has greater charms in the view of angels than even the spectacle of their own happy society, or that of all those saints on earth who persevere in pursuing the way to life eternal. And if the mere contemplation of this change is so sweet to angels in heaven, oh, how sweet must the experience itself be to the penitent!—for he it is who *tastes that the Lord is gracious,*—who tastes the unspeakable comfort that arises from the pardon of his sins and peace with God; he it is who goes on from strength to strength, from smaller to larger discoveries of the blessings that are in God and his Christ; he it is that *comes to God, comes to Jesus the mediator, and to the blood of sprink-*

*ling; to the general assembly and church of the first-born; to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to an innumerable company of angels.* Hence none ever experienced this change indeed who did not consider it far above every other event of his life: he may have experienced many other changes, and some of a very pleasing kind; he may have passed from a state of poverty and hardship to a situation of affluence and every earthly comfort; or he may have been raised up from a bed of pain and sickness to the enjoyment of ease and health: but if he is a true Christian, if he has ever been a true penitent, his conversion is an event that can never lose its importance in his regard; the season of his first repentance is an era in the records of his memory; it must always appear as a brilliant spot in his retrospect; it hallows the place and the hour that witnessed it; it lays him under a deeper, a more sacred obligation to the minister or the friend that was the honoured instrument of producing it, than he can entertain towards any inferior benefactor. And well it may; for it is a change of which the happy consequences shall endure for ever: all other benefits are temporal and transient; this alone is eternal: its value will be just as great when thousands of ages shall have passed away as it was at the first moment. Do you suppose those penitents who occasioned this joy in heaven at the first preaching of the gospel have found any abatement in their happiness by the lapse of eighteen centuries? No, my brethren! that happiness is just as fresh as on the day when they first *entered into the joy of their Lord.* The experience of eternity has rather increased than diminished its value. It is repentance that changes the whole aspect of things, whether present or future. The conviction that we have repented, that we have experienced that real, vital conversion which places us in a state of friendship with the Author of our being, this conviction lightens all afflictions, brightens every prospect, gives peace in the hour of death, and at the last day,—amid the wreck of elements, amid the dissolution of the material heavens and earth,—the spark of celestial immortality that was first kindled in repentance will emerge from the darkness of the sepulchre, and shine for ever in *the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness!* Ah, my brethren! the time is coming, and may be very near, when you will have nothing left to do but to lay down your head on your death-bed pillow; and then, it is probable if not before, yet then you will begin to feel the force of what has now been suggested on the subject of repentance. In that hour, the least apprehension that you are a real penitent,—the faintest hope that you have laid hold on Christ with a true heart,—will give you far more satisfaction than any event that ever occurred to your attention. Oh, then, let none dismiss this subject with indifference: let none have listened to this discourse without being prevailed upon to retire this evening, and in the stillness of his chamber, and the solitude of his soul, to pour forth a fervent, importunate prayer, that he may be numbered among those penitent sinners who here occasion joy in heaven, and who will hereafter obtain eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

# XVIII.

## NATURE AND DANGER OF EVIL COMMUNICATIONS

1 Cor. xv. 33.—*Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.**

[PREACHED AT CAMBRIDGE, IN AUGUST, 1826.]

This passage is taken from a heathen poet, Menander, and shows that Paul was not unacquainted with the literature of the pagan world. By this he was peculiarly fitted for some parts of his work, being destined to bear the name of Christ before princes, magistrates, and philosophers, especially in the Roman and Grecian parts of the earth. The maxim accords with universal experience, and was worthy, therefore, of being adopted as a portion of those records of eternal truth which are to be the guide of mankind in all succeeding ages.

The connexion is not that in which we should have expected such a maxim to be inserted,—it is in the midst of a very affecting and instructive view of the resurrection of the dead, and the life everlasting; but the occasion of it was this: the Corinthians had received, from the intrusion of false teachers, principles which militated against that great doctrine. They had been taught to explain it away, and to resolve it merely into a moral process which takes place in the present world; interpreting what is said of the resurrection of the dead in a mystical and figurative manner. The apostle insinuates, that it was by a mixture of the corrupt communications of these men with the Christian church, and the intimate contact into which they had permitted themselves to come with them, that they had been led off from the fundamental doctrine of the gospel, and rejected a primary part of the apostolic testimony. "For, if there be no resurrection of the dead, then," as he observed, "is Christ not risen, and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain; ye are yet in your sins."†

We see, that, notwithstanding the apostle had planted pure Christianity among the Corinthians, and had confirmed it by the most extraordinary miracles and supernatural operations; yet, such was the contagion of evil example and corrupt communication, that the members of the Corinthian church, in a very short time, departed from the fundamental articles of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ; and hence we may learn the importance, nay, the necessity, of being on our guard in this respect, and of avoiding such confidence in ourselves as might induce us to neglect the caution here so forcibly expressed. "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."

Among the first things accomplished by our blessed Lord after his

* This sermon has been prepared by collating and blending the notes of the Hon. Mr. Baron Gurney with those of Joshua Wilson, Esq.

† 1 Cor. xv. 13, 14, 17.

ascension was the organization of the Christian churches by his Word and Spirit through the instrumentality of his apostles. These he placed under suitable laws, appointing proper officers, and regulating them by the simple maxims of mutual love, forbearance, and charity: and no doubt the great design which he had in thus forming Christian churches was to furnish room for the cultivation of a social spirit, without that danger of infection which would spring from it in a world abounding with evil examples, and actuated by evil maxims. Knowing that man is naturally a social creature, and prone to unite with his kind, he was pleased to form a select society wherein the exercise of the social affections might tend to the purification of the heart, the sanctification of the character, and the perfecting of man in the image of God and the Redeemer. A principle of action so efficacious as that of the social affections, by which men are perpetually assimilating themselves to one another, was not to be neglected by the great founder of our religion. He has consecrated it in the formation of Christian churches, and thus erected the strongest rampart against the incursions of evil example, and the influence of a "world that lieth in wickedness."

In considering these words, there are three things to which I would request your serious attention:

In the first place, I shall state what those communications are which may be termed "evil."

Secondly, explain the way in which they operate so as to "corrupt good manners:" and,

Thirdly, shall endeavour to enforce the warning, or exhortation, insinuated or comprehended in the passage, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."

I. It will be natural to inquire, What are "evil communications?" It is plainly impossible, in the present state of the world, entirely to avoid intercourse with bad men; this would be, as the apostle observed, "to go out of the world." "I write unto you," said he, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, "not to company with fornicators; howbeit, not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters, for then must ye needs go out of the world: but now I have written to you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one, no not to eat."* The intercourse of society must be maintained, without respect to the characters of men, to such an extent as the business of life requires. No one can possibly avoid occasional intercourse with those with whom habitual communications would be in the highest degree dangerous. If he is led into such society by the demands of his calling, the very necessity of going into it, in distinction from his choice of it, will excite a degree of caution well calculated to counteract the contagion; and, being in the path of duty, such a person may expect to be upheld by the succours of Divine grace, which are never withheld from those who commit themselves to the guidance of God. An

* 1 Cor. v. 10, 11.

unsocial spirit, that would lead us, like the Essenes of old, into the solitudes of the wilderness, and to desert the active stations of human society, though it would be accompanied with the advantage of being entirely exempted from evil example, would be utterly inconsistent with the genius of Christianity, and the example of our great Lord. But still, we must not, under pretence of yielding to the necessary calls of business, cultivate and cherish that "evil communication" which is here said to "corrupt good manners."

1. Now, in the first place, that communication may be justly regarded evil, in the highest sense, which is corrupt in relation to its immediate tendency to taint the purity of the mind by associations of a lascivious and sensual nature. That conversation which is calculated to bring before the mind images of indelicacy and impurity, which owes its zest and force to the power of such associations, and is adapted to familiarize the mind to that from which a pure and chaste imagination recoils, must be considered in the highest degree of this kind; and how large a proportion of many societies owe their attraction almost entirely to this ingredient! The real Christian will never, for a moment, put himself, voluntarily, into a society where this contagion prevails, and will take the earliest opportunity of escaping from it, if by accident he is thrown into such company.

2. But, short of this, that may be denominated evil communication where the parties are of such a character that religion is not adverted to, or thought of in a serious or practical manner, where it has no hold upon the mind, where the fear of God is evidently dismissed, and there is no Scriptural rule of action.

The mere absence of religion is sufficient to constitute that evil communication against which we are guarded. Those persons whose conversation is not plainly vicious, but who appear to have no true fear of God, no regard to the obligations of religion, who evidently live "without God in the world," without any habitual reference to a future state, must be considered as constituting a class of characters with which he who earnestly seeks his salvation will not voluntarily come into contact. It is not to be supposed that the Christian can always select, even as the associates of his confidential hours, those who are partakers of Divine grace, those who are really converted to God; though, as far as possible, it will be his wisdom to select such as these: yet, it is not too much to say, that he should avoid, as much as possible, any intimate connexion with such as appear to be not at all influenced by the considerations of religion, and seem entirely strangers to its hopes, fears, restraints, and prohibitions; though their conduct may be in other respects unexceptionable and inoffensive.

3. It is almost unnecessary to observe, that is an evil communication, in a high degree, which abounds with objections to Christianity, and is calculated to produce a doubt, either of its Divine origin or of the certainty of its most important truths. He who wishes to have his faith confirmed in the evidence of Christianity will never form an intimacy with those who are opposed to that evidence; who have

thrown off the restraints of religion, renounced allegiance to the Saviour, and adopted the loose and skeptical doctrines of a licentious age.

4. And to this class we may add those who have discarded the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, and who are envenomed with an antipathy to them, so as to be desirous, on all occasions, to multiply proselytes, by winning men to their own persuasion in regard to the distinctive points in which they are at variance with real Christians of all ages. Such as have endeavoured to corrupt the fundamental principles of Christianity must, in the esteem of persons who hold those principles sacred, be regarded as tempting to "evil communication." To this caution we are led by the context; for those who corrupted the faith of the Corinthians were not such as had rejected Christianity altogether, not such as had entirely relapsed into heathenism or Judaism, but those who had denied the fundamental testimony of the apostles, contradicted the primary truths of Christianity, and introduced another and different gospel from that which the apostles had promulgated. The apostle John lays down an injunction on this subject, which must be regarded as still in force: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God; he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed."* We are not to encourage an intercourse of a voluntary kind with them, nor place ourselves under their influence: for that influence must be considered as anti-christian in proportion as such persons have deviated from the fundamental doctrines which are taught in Christianity.

5. They whose moral principles are loose, with respect to the great obligations of justice and equity, who indulge themselves in dishonourable practices, who propagate loose and licentious maxims with regard to the mode of conducting business, who acknowledge themselves to be ready to take any advantages, and are restrained by no other consideration than the penalty of the law, who are ready to sacrifice principle and conscience to filthy lucre, must be considered as a source of evil communication, against which we are here expressly warned.

II. But I proceed, in the next place, briefly to point out the way in which "evil communication" operates in corrupting "good manners."

You know very well, my brethren, that the order of the natural world is maintained by the operation of matter upon matter; and that the order of the moral world is maintained by the action of mind upon mind. As the great revolutions of nature are carried on by the reciprocal action of the various parts of which the visible universe consists, upon each other, whether of smaller portions or of greater masses; so that mysterious order which the Divine Being maintains in the moral world is upheld and preserved by the mutual action of one mind upon another. This action is incessantly going on; and

* 2 John 9, 10.

though it borrows for its instrumentality the organs of the body, yet the ultimate object is mind. The great medium through which this is maintained is the intercourse and conversation of man with man, which brings one mind into contact with another, and is perpetually modifying the mind which is thus drawn into union, and derives modification from that mind with which it converses. We are continually drawing and being drawn, impelling and resisting or yielding, assimilating ourselves to others, and others to ourselves; nor is it possible to go into any company and come from it exactly in the same state of mind. The moral modification is perpetually going on; and if we trace it exactly, we shall find that it is either evil or good; very seldom, if ever, entirely indifferent or neutral. It is one of the fundamental laws of nature, that our minds should be subject to perpetual modification from the minds of others; nor is it within the reach of our will to determine whether this influence shall be exercised or not. Yet we may determine to what influence we subject it: we may determine what society we will keep, but not what influence that society which we choose shall have upon us. It operates according to certain fixed and infallible laws, so that no person can, by any pretence of self-control, justify exposing himself to the action of a power the operation of which is determined by laws quite independent of himself.

One of the first feelings of every person who goes into company is, to please and be pleased. If he be a person of a benevolent and social spirit, he goes with the very design of assimilating his mind, as much as possible, to the minds of those with whom he converses. This is a silent compact, without which pleasure can neither be imparted nor received. Just in proportion to the delicacy and force of this sympathy is the pleasure derived from society; and they possess it in the most intense and vivid degree who can most imperceptibly slide into the feelings of others, so as to incorporate for a time their sentiments, feelings, and dispositions with their own. Hence we plainly perceive that there is a preparation in the very nature of society, that society especially which is chosen and of a voluntary nature, for an assimilation of our minds to the views and principles, sentiments and dispositions, of those with whom we converse.

We not only go into society unarmed, but we go with a preparation in favour of the action of the sentiments and the agency of the minds of others which is then operating upon us. We go with the intention of being pleased with the sympathies which that intercourse excites, and lay our hearts and minds, as we experience or expect social pleasure, open as much as possible to the full and entire action of the social instinct. Let us suppose then, at least, that the society into which we enter is not positively vicious in any other sense than as it is distinguished by a total absence of religion; let the persons with whom we associate be only characterized by an entire neglect of God, an absence of the fear of the Almighty: let their general conduct and deportment be such, and such only, as might be supposed to take place if the verities of religion were exploded, and the expectation of a future account entirely dismissed; it is not too much to say that this

society itself will possess a very pernicious influence over any mind. It is dangerous to be accustomed to the absence of religion, and to be familiarized to the contemplation of the most solemn and important subjects in a state of disunion from God, and non-advertence to the prospect of eternity.

For a person, especially a young person, to be accustomed to hear life and death, judgment and eternity, and all the most serious and awful scenes of human existence spoken of, I will not say with unbecoming levity, but without advertence to religion, with regard only to physical causes and effects, is a dangerous process, and must be attended with the most serious peril. Next to the infusion of positive impiety, the most evil element in which the mind can be placed is that out of which religion is expelled. To live without God in the world, and to converse with those who thus live, is, only in a lower degree than positive impiety, less dangerous to a creature who is in a state of probation, and whose everlasting interest depends on acquaintance with and obedience to his Maker.

I recollect, some years ago, that upon reading some very popular tales (Moral Tales they are styled), the talent of which is exceedingly great, but which are distinguished by the total absence of religion, and the want of all reference to it even in the scenes of death; the influence on my mind was such that, during the time devoted to that reading, it was with great difficulty and perplexity I was able to discharge my ministerial duties. It became, therefore, painfully evident to me, that to be conversant long together with trains of thought or associations of ideas from which religion is entirely excluded is of most dangerous tendency; for religion is a positive thing, and at the same time it requires to be brought into view: it must be realized by an effort of the mind; it addresses not itself to the senses, does not occur naturally in the paths of life; it lies in an invisible state, and can only be realized by a positive act of faith, and be made operative by a serious exertion of the mental faculties, by calling our attention to spiritual impressions, and thereby overpowering the mechanical and necessary operations of sensible objects.

In the next place, suppose the society into which we enter be vicious in the sense before adverted to; that it be impure society, distinguished by the prevalence of indelicate jests and lascivious associations; such communication, it is unnecessary to say, *must* corrupt good manners. Must not the primary effect be, at least, gradually to inure the mind to the contemplation of vicious objects, without horror and disgust? Are you not aware that familiarity tends to weaken all impressions? As the mind is passive in receiving them, there is nothing so disgusting at the first view but it may be rendered indifferent, or even an object of complacency. Vicious objects, though they revolt a pure and chaste mind, though every well-disciplined spirit turns aside from them with strong disrelish, yet they have such an alliance with the corrupt propensities of our nature, which always remain with us (for even the best are but partially sanctified), that the effect of bringing such objects frequently before the mind must be to subdue the antipathy, to

wear off the impression of disgust, and soften the features of deformity; to teach us to contemplate such objects with indifference, till at length we shall certainly come to regard them with a greater or less degree of complacency. The horror of vice gradually subsides, till, before men are aware, they find themselves affected with the most impure conversation very differently from what they were at first. The chastity of the mind is violated; they have lost that instinctive recoil of disgust which such objects naturally inspire, and are become capable of partaking of them with that guilty zest with which their association with the corrupt tendencies of our nature is too apt to invest them. This is a process perpetually going on. There are persons perpetually receiving the contamination of impurity by this channel. If, then, you meet with persons of this description, who delight to communicate the taint of impurity, and seek to draw down the minds of others to that gross element of sensuality in which they themselves are grovelling, avoid them, pass not by them, "turn from them and pass away;" recollect that such conversation is most essentially evil, and will, before you are aware, corrupt your "good manners."

Suppose, in the next place, that the society into which we enter be of an impious nature, distinguished by a rejection of Christianity, or of its great and leading doctrines, and has in it, consequently, the contagion of impiety; such communication cannot fail, in the strongest degree, to "corrupt good manners." To hear objections against Christianity continually repeated without being answered, to hear the cause of Christ attacked in every possible form without being in a situation, in a becoming manner, to undertake its defence, must have an injurious tendency. Conversation, if we intend to please and be pleased, should never be a scene of continual dispute; we must either relinquish such society or hold our peace. That person who feels himself called upon on every occasion to defend his religion, will grow weary of contention, and seek repose in another kind of society. But if he continues in it, he will at length learn to be silent; silence will lead to acquiescence, and finally he will adjust his opinions to the standard of those with whom he associates. Every man makes the esteem of his companions a great and leading object. When a person, therefore, from that motive, learns to suppress his convictions, he will easily pass from thence to that guilty shame of Jesus Christ before men which is one of the most baneful elements of corruption and degeneracy. It is dangerous to be in that society where all is against Christianity, and nothing in its favour; where it is perpetually assailed in a variety of forms, and nothing said in a serious, argumentative manner to sustain its interests and vindicate its sanctity. If any man supposes that he has strength of mind to continue in such society without having the foundations of his confidence in the truths of Christianity weakened, that man is entirely unacquainted with his own heart. You may feel conscious of no change of opinion, you may relinquish no article of faith, but the practical assent of the mind is capable of all sorts of varieties possible; the degree of conviction, the strength of that hold which religious principle has upon you, may be weakened in a most

essential manner before you have altered the speculative articles of your belief. The speculative belief in the great truths of Christianity is, in pious minds, continually changing itself into practical belief, producing that sense of the reality of eternal things which justifies the definition given of faith, as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Infidel society has the effect of weakening that practical conviction, of estranging the mind from the evidences of Divine truth, and bringing it into a state of obscurity; it is an element of darkness, and no person can preserve, within its sphere, a permanent and abiding conviction of such truths as are only seen by the eye of faith, and are best realized in the calmness of the sanctuary, and the solitude of the closet. Besides, we shall always find that those who have rejected the yoke of Christianity are anxious to propagate their disbelief; they have not the tranquillity of innocence, the confidence of truth; and they feel themselves strongly fortified, secure, and fearless, in proportion as they have swelled their confederacy, extinguished the conviction, and put out that light of faith in others which is a condemning light to them, and holds out to them a fearful misgiving in the prospect of eternity. Those who are determined to bid farewell to Christianity have not done it in consequence of a serious process of conviction, but in consequence of consulting their passions, not their reason, determining to gratify their appetites without restraint or control, and indulging in the pleasures and honours of this world without check. Conscious of this, in a greater or less degree they fear that the foundation they are resting upon may prove insecure; they wish, therefore, to be strengthened by the co-operation of others, and feel a guilty satisfaction in proportion as they multiply disciples among their associates, and are thus enabled to hear an echo in every voice, and see the reflection of infidelity in every breast. Is it not extraordinary that men who can only boast that they have discovered that man is nothing,—that this world is the whole of his existence,—that his destiny is withered, and shrunk to the shortest possible compass,—is it not extraordinary that they cannot at least be silent; that they should be desirous to propagate a discovery so full of shame and reproach? The reason is, that they have fears on the side of religion, though they have not its hopes; they dread the truth of it, having given up all prospect of benefit from it, having relinquished all part in its consolations; therefore they feel their fears allayed, their perturbation subside, in proportion as they swell their numbers by an extensive confederation. They are "deceiving and deceived."

Let me earnestly impress it on every one who wishes to be saved;—and if you do not, why approach the sanctuary of God, why hear the words of this book, why lift up a prayer to the throne of heaven in the name of the Great Redeemer?—if you wish to be saved, go not into such society; or, if you enter it unawares, remain not in it. To choose such persons as confidants of your hours of affectionate and social intercourse is to live in an element of contagion; it is to go into a pest-house; it is to take up your abode in the midst of the most virulent and destructive diseases. "Evil communications" will "corrupt

good manners." No experience of our own,—no extent of observation may go to invalidate or impair the truth of this maxim, which is confirmed by the experience of all ages.

III. But I proceed, in the third place, briefly to explain the warning here given, and to enforce the caution which is strongly implied in the words "Be not deceived." There are many sources of self-deception; let me, therefore, warn every one not to be deceived.

1. In the first place, be not deceived by the adduction of false precedents. It may be suggested that our Lord was pleased to mingle indiscriminately with all classes and descriptions of persons; but do not imagine that it would, on that account, be safe for *you* to imitate this part of his conduct. Recollect the infinite disparity of his situation and character, and yours. He came into a world of contagion, but it was to impart the medicine of life; he came to a great infirmary, but he was himself the physician of souls; he "came to save sinners," but was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."* When Satan himself came he found nothing in him. Does it follow that we, who are placed at so infinite a distance beneath him, should be safe in such contagion? "Be not deceived;" do not take a partial view of our Saviour's character; do not consider one portion of it only—his exposure to moral danger,—while you forget his sanctity, his watchfulness, his care over his own conduct, his self-government, and the constant use of those rules of prudence and piety which are recommended by other parts of his example. If you can find an infallible way to overcome temptation, and achieve the victory over the enemies of your salvation, you may then plead the precedent of our Lord's example against the genius of his religion and the import of his precepts. It was impossible that his spotless character should be contaminated. Can *we* plead that exemption and impossibility?

2. Be not deceived by your past experience. You may be ready to say, that you have been frequently exposed to vicious society,—you may be living in it now, and perceive none of those evils, discern none of that degeneracy and corruption to which we have adverted; and you appear to pass through it with impunity: "Be not deceived:" you are very ill judges, it may be, of the state of your own minds; you may imagine that you have received no injury because you have fallen into no great crime, have violated none of the more essential laws of social morality; but if you look within, you may perceive a preparation for the commission of these in the weakening of that conscience which preserves you in the fear of God, in the decay and eclipse of the spirit of faith, in the relaxed hold of the great prospects of eternity which you had before. What has been the effect of such society on your private devotions? Has it carried you to your closet? Has it prepared you to retire for communion with God? Has it endeared to you the Scriptures, or estranged you from them? Has it made the transition easy to the duties of private and solitary piety? Did you find such society calculated to make it more difficult, or more easy, for you to enter into the true spirit of religion; and to practise

* Heb. vii. 26.

those duties without which all the devotions of the sanctuary will be only "walking in a vain show," and seeking the applause of man, instead of the approbation of Him who "seeth in secret?"

3. Do not be deceived by any complacent reference to the time of life at which you have arrived, or the progress in religion which you have already made. Though the influence of evil society upon the young is of the most corrupting tendency; though their minds, in the period when the character is formed, are most subject to its hurtful influence; yet the danger of "evil communications" is by no means confined to them. No: at whatever period of life you have arrived, "evil communications" will "corrupt good manners." Habits are lost in the same way as they are acquired; the fruits of long custom in right action are speedily dissipated and destroyed by exposure to contrary custom in doing wrong; and the mind of no person has arrived at such a state of confirmation in holy habits as to make a relaxation of vigilance safe, or enable it to yield itself up securely to the casual influence of place and society. Religion is a perpetual warfare; religion is a perpetual exercise of self-command; it is a perpetual reference to the will of God; it is a perpetual use of the power of self-government and attention to the invisible eye of Him that seeth in secret. If you commit yourself to evil society now, what shall hinder you in the most advanced age from forsaking the law of God, and disgracing the latter part of your life by conduct totally different from that which conferred dignity on your youth? Solomon in his youth feared God, but when old age came upon him, through the contagious example of his idolatrous wives, he forsook the God of his fathers, and exposed his kingdom to perdition and ruin. No, my brethren, there is no such thing as depending upon any force of habit, unless its influence produces right conduct at present; if it inspires us with a holy resolution, and gives a right view of our duty at the present moment, and determination to adhere to it, we may rejoice in that habit; but if it produces recumbency, a slothful dependence upon God, and neglect of the precautions of religion and the rules of duty, we have reason to believe that he who thus thinketh he standeth will soon fall.

4. Be not deceived by any supposed strength of resolution with which you may enter into such society. It is much easier abstained from than renounced. The paths of sinners are much more easily shunned than they are quitted. When confederacies are formed, it requires a powerful effort to break them. It is far less difficult to keep out of society than to resist its current. The action of fire is mechanical and necessary, you may approach it or not; so you may avoid evil company if you please. The ranks of impiety are not so thin as not to give you sufficient warning to escape them; but when you are in them, in the very focus of temptation, no resolution you can exert will for a moment stop its progress: you must submit to its action; you are committed to your fate, and must take the consequences; you must be deteriorated and degenerated with the causes of deterioration and degeneracy. Be not deceived, then, by supposing that any previous resolution has considerable influence on the conduct of men

when they are off their guard and open to the impression of social affections. This is the season, of all others, in which mental resolution has least power; the mind is not only open, but, before it is aware, becomes relaxed; the love of association soon comes to supplant all other thoughts; all the cooler reflections, the wiser resolves of the closet vanish; all the force of the most strenuous intentions melt like wax before the sun, in the warmth of social intercourse. In proportion as the social affections are vivid and warm, in that proportion is the necessary effect in dissipating and giving to the wind the force of the most strenuous resolutions.

Hence permit me to suggest one or two cautions of prudence. In the first place, let those who have a serious sense of religion bind themselves with the vows of God, and enter on a solemn profession of them at an early period of life. Enter into the church of God, take upon you the vows of the Almighty; if your hearts are sincere with him, if you have reason to believe you are in earnest in seeking after him, and have committed yourself to the Redeemer, take upon you his yoke openly, bear his name upon your forehead before men. This will have the happiest effect in strengthening you against the force of evil example. Recollecting the nature of your engagements, you will be awakened to a sense of consistency of conduct, and be shocked at the thought of bringing reproach on the cause of God. A sense of self-respect will come in aid of the higher principles of religion, and the higher motives to virtuous conduct. You will remember that you have assumed, if I may so say, a peculiar caste; and when you look upon the pure and holy robe of the profession of Christianity you thus wear, you will be anxious, if you have been sincere in making that profession, to keep it "unspotted from the world." It is well, in such a state of temptation, to render retreat difficult, if not impossible, to put yourself on ground from which you cannot retreat. He who has done this effectually has given up his name to Christ, and enrolled himself among his disciples, has gone forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach, has thus cut off his own retreat; he renders it impossible to consult his earthly interests at the expense of piety, without bringing upon himself all the reproaches of his conscience, the ridicule of unbelievers, and the contempt of his companions and of mankind.

Let all young persons, then, bind themselves with the vows of God, and unite themselves to those whom God has touched by his Spirit, and is guiding, under the convoy of the Captain of salvation, to eternal glory. The church will willingly receive all such as are desirous of uniting themselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant, and will say, as Moses did to Hobab, "Come with us, and we will do you good; we are going to the land of which the Lord our God hath said, I will give it you."* Are you linked in with society from which you find it difficult to break? Change your place of abode, make a sacrifice of worldly convenience, nay, relinquish some of the tendernesses of life, for the purpose of securing your safety: there is no place so

* Num. x. 29.

dangerous, none from which you ought to flee with so much rapidity, as that which is the seat of contagion, where, enlinked with vicious associates, you cannot remain without being in the way to perpetuate your confederacy with sinners. Flee from such a place; as you would not "walk in the counsel of the ungodly;" stand not "in the way of sinners," lest you "sit down in the seat of the scorners." Flee, then, as for your life. These, you know, are different stages in depravity, different degrees of progress in corruption; walking "in the counsel of the ungodly" is the first; he who does that will next "stand in the way of sinners," and that is a ready and proper preparation for sitting down "in the seat of the scornful."* Do you wish not to be ashamed of Christ before men? Go into society which shall not tempt you to that shame; seek those associates before whom you may, without a blush, lift up your heads and avow your attachment to a once crucified, but now glorified, Redeemer.

Let it be remembered, that with those with whom you voluntarily associate here you shall be associated hereafter by the Disposer of all things, for ever: with those persons with whom you choose to spend your time you must spend your eternity; these are inseparably allied. Those who choose the society of the vicious, those who keep company with the enemies of God in this world by choice and election, will have their portions with such in the regions of everlasting darkness. Eternity is pressing on: ask yourselves, then, with whom would you wish to be associated when the voice of the archangel and the trump of God shall proclaim that "there shall be time no longer." With whom would you choose to rise? With whom would you have your everlasting portion? With patriarchs and prophets? With evangelists and apostles? With saints and martyrs now shining forth in the glories of celestial radiance? Or with those who, having slighted the warnings and despised the mercies of the Lord, must assuredly "awake to shame and everlasting contempt."† There are but two societies in the universe, the church and the world; the servants of God and the servants of Satan; the votaries of time and the votaries of eternity; they are each of them claiming your regard, and saying to ingenuous youth, "Come with us," and holding out their respective allurements and attractions. One presents "the pleasures of sin for a season," to be followed by bitter remorse and everlasting despair; the other the prize of immortality, the society of saints, calm of conscience, quiet of mind, the peace of a self-approving spirit, consolation unutterable, and that only as the earnest of the pleasures to be enjoyed at the right-hand of God; that fulness of joy which is for evermore.

Recollect, time is pressing on, and we shall soon be that which we shall continue to be for ever. Do not say, I will remain a little longer in the society of wicked persons, I will loiter a little longer in the pursuit of sin and sensual gratification, in the neglect of God and religion. While you are halting, God may decide for you; he has no sympathy with hesitation, but looks with contempt and abhorrence on

* Psalm i. 1. † Dan. xii. 2.

the infatuation and wretched folly and guilt of that mind which prefers the applause of the world, the pleasures of sin, and the gratification of a moment, to the "exceeding and eternal weight" of his favour and friendship. He has no sympathy with such persons, he abhors them; at least, they are exercising his patience every day. Despise not, then, "the riches of his goodness and long-suffering," lest, while you are halting between two opinions, God should lift up his hand "and swear that you shall not see his rest." "To-day," then, I say, to-day, "if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness."*

Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, "for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?"† For you are the temple of the living God, if you are Christians; and to be such I trust every one here is aspiring, as He hath said, "I will dwell with them and walk in them, and I will bless them; I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Therefore, "come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord; touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters saith the Most High God."‡

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## XIX.

## THE EVILS OF IDOLATRY, AND THE MEANS OF ITS ABOLITION.§

Isaiah ii. 18.—*The idols He shall utterly abolish.*

[PREACHED AT BRISTOL, FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE BAPTIST MISSIONS, NOVEMBER 2, 1826.]

The progress of Christianity in the world has already been so great and wonderful as to carry evidence of its Divine original, and of its promised final triumph over every false religion. Its vast effects have been produced principally by the simple instrument of preaching its doctrines, attended by the promised influence of the Holy Spirit. The same instrument, attended by the same influence, may be reasonably expected to effect the ultimate conversion of all the nations. This most desirable object we are on the present occasion assembled to promote.

It is agreed by expositors, that, in the connexion of the text, the success of the gospel is predicted: as a remarkable feature by which

* Psalm xcv. 7, 8. † 2 Cor. vi. 14–16. ‡ 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.
§ Printed from the notes of the Rev. Thomas Grinfield.

its success would be distinguished, the destruction of idolatry is mentioned in the words I have selected; in which two things are proposed to our attention,—the evil to be abolished, and the means of its abolition.

I. The evil to be abolished. This, as you will observe, is idolatry. It has been commonly and very properly distinguished as of two kinds, *literal* and *spiritual*. The latter, or *spiritual* idolatry, is an evil which, by the apostacy of our nature, attaches to all mankind, whether inhabiting Christian or pagan regions, except those individuals whose hearts have experienced a renovation by the Spirit of God. It is to the former, or *literal* idolatry, that the prophet in the text refers: this the connexion shows, where mention is made of those *idols of silver and gold*, which the converted idolaters would cast away. The progress of Christianity was, from the first, marked by the cessation of idol worship; and this was effected by the same means which are still to be employed. Men were called to *turn from their dumb idols to serve the living God*. The abandonment of a false worship must prepare the way for a moral revolution: men must cease from the adoration of images, before they can in any sense be worshippers of the true Jehovah.

There are two principal points of view in which we may regard the evil nature and effects of idolatry; its aspect towards God, and its aspect towards man. In the former aspect, it appears as a crime; in the latter, as a calamity: thus contemplated, it appears as an evil destructive equally to the Divine glory and to human happiness. Man naturally tends to this evil; and one generation after another gradually accumulated the follies of superstition, till it reached the monstrous extreme of gross idolatry.

1. The Word of God everywhere reprobates idolatry as an *abominable thing*, which the soul of God abhors. To provide against this, was a principal object in the political and municipal department of the Mosaic law. It is expressly prohibited by the first and the second commandment of the moral law; the first being designed to confirm the worship of the true God, the second to exclude every idolatrous form of worship. Idolatry makes a material symbol of the invisible God; but so jealous is the Divine Being of his own honour, that he has forbidden, not only the worship of any other or false god, but even the worship of *Himself* by the medium of a graven image. The golden calf was a representative of the God of Israel; and the calves set up by Jeroboam were the same: yet the worship of the golden calf occasioned the slaughter, by the Divine command, of three thousand persons; and the executioners of Divine vengeance were extolled for having forgotten the feelings of nature towards their nearest kindred: every man was commanded to slay his brother or his son, and so to consecrate himself to the Lord.* Where God's honour was so deeply concerned, men were to lose sight of common humanity. When the Israelites were tempted by the artifices of Balaam to commit idolatry at Baal-peor, twenty-four thousand were slain at once; the memory of Phinehas was immortalized on account of the holy zeal he dis-

* Exod. xxxii. 20.

played in the destruction of certain conspicuous offenders; and the Moabites were devoted to extermination, because, in this respect, they had proved a snare to Israel. According to the Divine appointment, credit was to be denied to the testimony of an idolater, and his life was to be taken by his nearest relative. All this marks the disposition, with regard to idolatry, of that Being who is *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.* If he does not now punish it as he once did, it is not that he hates it now less than formerly: but he spares men, that they may be brought to the knowledge of his will and his salvation: *Now he commands all men everywhere to repent, because he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world by Jesus Christ:* and he desires that we, who have received the gospel, should carry the tidings of this command to all mankind.

Idolatry is, with respect to the government of God, what treason or rebellion is with respect to civil government. It is the setting up of an idol in the place of the Supreme Power; an affront offered to that Majesty in which all order and authority is combined and concentred, and which is the fountain of all social blessings. Hence, in the eye of God nothing can dilute the turpitude or diminish the guilt of this offence. It makes no difference what may be the character of the rival: there is still an entire transfer of allegiance from *the blessed and only Potentate* to a palpable usurper; and the guilt remains the same. Were we even to suppose the character of the idol immaculate as that of Jesus Christ and God himself, the case would not be materially altered; an invasion would still be committed on the immense empire of the Most High. Were the idol even cast in a mould of the purest moral beauty, it would still, as an idol, be a monster deserving universal execration.

Idolatry is an evil which, where it exists, taints every apparent virtue; because it destroys the soul of duty, which is obedience to the Divine will, conformity to the Divine command. Though there exists an eternal rectitude, independent of written revelation; yet we, short-sighted creatures, must resign ourselves to be guided by the *revealed* will of God: conformity to this is our only sure standard. And the Scriptures everywhere assure us that nothing is acceptable to God that is not done under the influence of a sincere regard to his will. This is perfectly reasonable. Suppose a person to do accidentally, unintentionally, just what you would wish to have done; yet if, in so doing, he had no design to please you, will his conduct satisfy you as if he had acted from a regard to your wish, as your devoted servant? Your will, your authority never entered into his views and motives; and can he expect that you should reward him? Thus nothing is done rightly, nothing to any good purpose, where GOD is not regarded: the *single eye* is wanting; and, *that* wanting, *the whole body is full of darkness.* Men may do much good from merely self-interested or ambitious motives; and they may *have their reward*, the only reward they ever sought, in success and applause. Nebuchadnezzar was employed by God as a rod to scourge his guilty people; and, having served that purpose, was cast aside. Pagan philosophers

and heroes have exercised the virtues of temperance and moderation without the least advertence to the Divine will; and hence, as Augustine remarks, their virtues can only be regarded as *splendid sins*. "God was not in all their thoughts;" God was as much forgotten in their virtues as he was in their vices; they remained as dead in sin, because as dead to God, as ever. They sought to be admired and idolized in a world they were so soon to quit by creatures whose applause was of no value; and they were just as destitute of spiritual vitality as the most profligate of their fellow-mortals! Just as, amid the awful solemnities of the last day, we may imagine the impassioned admirer of nature or art beholding with regret so many fair objects and heart-ravishing scenes, in which he once delighted, all alike consigned to the final conflagration; even so the Christian may be supposed, on that occasion, touched with a momentary pang, to see many who here excited his admiration, many who perhaps obtained his esteem and awakened his tenderest sympathies, yet numbered at last with them that are *lost!* although he must then be satisfied, in a degree inconceivable at present, of the justice of their condemnation; inasmuch as (whatever they might have been besides) they were dead to God; they worshipped the creature more than the Creator; they were, in the essence of character, idolaters.

With respect to the *origin* of idolatry, it is probable that men began by raising images to the memory of departed heroes, and afterwards transferred their homage to the image itself; until they gradually descended to the worship of the meanest objects, even those which are the most obscene and unutterable. There is nothing so vile, filthy, disgusting, horrible, that has not, by some nation, been selected as an object of worship. Happily, we, my brethren, are situated so remote, both in time and place, from the principal of these abominations, that we are able to form only a very inadequate idea of the enormous folly to which they have proceeded.

2. But we turn to contemplate idolatry on another side; in its aspect towards man, its influence on society.

The apostle Paul informs us, that God hath shown to men what may be known concerning himself; that his invisible being, his eternal power and godhead, may be clearly seen and understood by the works of creation; so that those are *without excuse* who have changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image in the likeness of corruptible man, of birds, and beasts, and reptiles.* They are *without excuse;* their conduct admits of no apology: *wherefore*, as the apostle adds, *God gave them up to a reprobate*, a base and undiscerning, *mind*, and, *as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, he gave them up to their own vile affections*, and left them to violate even the laws of nature.

The origin of all the atrocities they committed was to be found in aversion to God; dislike of the spirituality and purity of his character; a desire, like Cain, to retire from the presence of their Maker; a wish to forget a Being whose character they knew to be utterly uncongenial

* Rom. i. 19-25.

with their own. This disposition originally led men to substitute idols for God. Those idols would, of course, be conceived of a character unlike that of God. Men would never form their imaginary deities after the model of him whom they disliked: accordingly, they receded to the utmost possible distance from all resemblance to the holy, omniscient, glorious God of Abraham and of Israel. Impure themselves, they were not disposed to adopt a God of purity; full of malignant passions, they would form no conception of a God of love —a Father pouring out his blessed fulness, and delighting in beneficence to his vast family. No, my brethren, their gods were of a different description; vindictive tyrants, divided, like themselves, in eternal factions and contentions; each pursuing his favourite objects and patronising his adopted party.

Homer, the first who appears to have composed a regular picture of idolatry, paints his Jupiter, or supreme deity, as deficient in every divine attribute; in omnipotence, in justice, and even in domestic peace. He paints Juno as the victim of eternal jealousy; and with good reason for her jealousy, when the earth was peopled, according to Homer, with the illegitimate progeny of Jupiter, to whom almost every hero traced his pedigree. Mars was the personification of rage and violence; Mercury the patron of artifice and theft. How far such a mythology influenced the character of its votaries it is perhaps impossible for us to know: nothing could be more curious than to look into the mind of a heathen. But it is certain that the mind must have been exceedingly corrupted by the influence of such a creed: and probably each individual idolater would be influenced by the deity whose character happened to be most accommodated to his own peculiar passions. An Achilles would emulate a Mars in ferocity and deeds of blood: a Ulysses would be a Mercury in craft and stratagem: while the ambitious mind of an Alexander or Julius Cæsar would aspire to act a Jupiter on earth. What a state of society must *that* be in which no vice, no crime could be perpetrated that was not sanctioned by the very objects of religious worship! What a religion *that* which exerted an *antagonist* force against conscience itself!—a religion which silenced or perverted the dictates of the moral sense, *the thoughts that should either accuse or excuse us* within! The temples of Venus, we are informed, were crowded by a thousand prostitutes, as servants and representatives of that licentious goddess; the very places of their worship were the scenes of their vices, and seemed as if they were designed to consecrate the worst part of their conduct!

In modern India, idolatry is exemplified on a scale scarcely less extensive; and everywhere it is marked by two leading qualities, *cruelty* and *impurity*. The Hindoo deities are of a ferocious and sanguinary character, and are supposed to drink out of the sculls of heir victims. The more we become acquainted with these idolaters, ike Ezekiel when he surveyed the *chambers of imagery*, we discover only the *greater abominations*. In their system, as connected with their conduct, there is a perpetual action and reaction: vice gene-

rating idols, and idols fortifying vice. First, we find mere abstractions of the mind formed concerning the Deity; these are next imbodied in idols; and all the human passions are enlisted by devotion itself on the side of vice. *Here*, in a country influenced by the light of revelation, we are accustomed in all our ideas to associate religion and morality: we never suppose a religious man can be any other than a good moralist; when we see a person who fears God, and makes a conscience of thoughts, we never doubt that his practice is correct; his word is as an oath to us; because the standard he adopts is the Divine will, and he is himself a faint image and adumbration of the moral glory of God. But the fire of piety, instead of kindling, would only quench the fire of idolatry. A man must be unfitted for that worship in exact proportion to his fear and love of God. The image of Satan must displace the image of God in the heart of every idolater.

II. Hitherto we have attended to a melancholy subject, and have seen only the nakedness and degradation of our race. We must now more briefly advert to a brighter scene, presented by the prophet, when he assures us that Jesus Christ (of whom he is speaking) will utterly abolish idolatry, and sweep it from the face of the earth with the besom of destruction; not a worshipper of idols shall be left at last, but His wrath shall consume that man. In sending the gospel to the heathen, you offer, as it were, the holy incense, like Moses, when he interposed between God and the perishing Israelites: you stand, like him, *between the dead and the living*,—the dead and the living for eternity! and you *stay the plague!*

No sooner did Christianity appear, than its formidable power, as the opponent of idolatry, was felt and manifested. Pliny,* writing about seventy years after the death of Christ, declared to the Emperor Trajan, that in the province of Bithynia, where he presided as proconsul, the temples were nearly deserted: a striking proof how rapidly the system of paganism gave way before the sword of the Spirit wielded by the primitive missionaries. One unhappy exception, indeed, still remains, in the idolatrous worship of the Romish church; but the triumphs of the gospel are advancing, and as we have lately seen the islands of the South Sea casting away their ancient idols *to the moles and to the bats*, so shall every system of idolatry and false worship be utterly and for ever overthrown.

Preaching, an instrument so unpromising in the view of carnal reason, has been the chief instrument employed in producing these moral revolutions. *When, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God*,—when the only Being against whom all conspired was the Maker of all, and men proved themselves to be blind at noonday,—*it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.* Nothing but this can save them: wo be to that man who teaches that there is any other method of salvation than the preaching Jesus Christ. This is the instrument which God has crowned with success. Before

* See the note at page 513

the rising Sun of Righteousness, idolatry melted away as wax before the fire; and effects the reverse of those produced by that baneful system attend the beneficent progress of the gospel. Cruelty and impurity disappear in holiness and brotherly love. Christianity, instead of severing the ties of nature, harmonizes and unites the most distant from each other, as brethren; according to the design of our Saviour, *that he should gather together in one the children of God, that were scattered abroad:* while those who before were stained with every vice are purified in their hearts and conduct by the influence of heavenly truth.

In proportion, my brethren, as you value the blessings of religion, you will wish that others should partake them with yourselves: in proportion as you are disposed to pray, *Lord, evermore give us this bread*, you will desire to communicate it to all besides. You will love your brethren, as you love your Saviour, *not having seen* either: if you have been divinely taught, this will be your feeling in regard to all mankind. That man's heart is not right with God who can look unmoved upon the vast heathen world, lying *dead in trespasses and sins:* dead by a moral, a voluntary death, such as cannot be pleaded in arrest of the Divine judgment. But though they have destroyed themselves, in God is their help; he has laid help on one that is mighty to save, even to the uttermost. The Father has appointed his beloved Son to be the dispenser of all spiritual blessings, as Pharaoh appointed Joseph to be the dispenser of bread to the perishing Egyptians; and, as Pharaoh answered every application by saying, "Go to Joseph;" the Father says to sinners, Go to Jesus Christ with all your wants; no man can come to the Father but by him. He is the ark, in which all the hopes, all the treasures of human nature are reposited; in him is all the fulness of God.

A cause so great and sacred as that of Christianity absorbs all those differences and divisions, of a minor kind, that exist among us; and I trust and believe there is not a missionary of our own Baptist communion who would not infinitely prefer the conversion and salvation of one soul, to making the whole heathen world adopt our views of a disputed and comparatively inconsiderable ceremony. If there *is* such a man, I am no party to his sentiment; there exists no communion between us; let not my soul enter into that man's secret! No, my dear brethren! we, I trust, have far higher views; the only kind of proselytes we desire to make are proselytes to God and Jesus Christ! In the promotion of such a cause we are ready to forget our own denomination, and to co-operate with every other; we feel that, with such an object proposed, were *we* to sit still, the very stones in our streets would cry out, and almost rise up into Bibles and missionaries! Contribute, brethren, to the support and extension of this sacred enterprise, and you will convert *uncertain riches* into the means of bestowing *the true riches*,—of diffusing *the unsearchable riches of Christ;* your contributions will become, in the hand of God, Bibles, instructions, prayers, sermons,—the messengers of saving mercy to many immortal souls.

# XX.

## CHRIST'S MISSION FOR THE ADOPTION OF SONS IN THE FULNESS OF TIME.*

GAL. iv. 4, 5.—*But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*

[PREACHED AT MELBOURNE, NEAR ROYSTON, SEPTEMBER, 1827.]

THE Galatians, among whom Paul had taught the religion of Christ, were soon led astray as to some of its most essential and important doctrines, by the arts of Judaizing teachers.

They admitted and inculcated the obligation of circumcision and other ceremonies of the ancient law, maintaining that without these men could not be saved; thereby vacating and superseding the sacrifice of Christ, and denying the sufficiency of his mediation and death for the salvation of sinful men. Of these Paul testified, that if any man submitted to circumcision on this ground, with a view to procure acceptance with God, or as any ingredient of justification in his sight, for such a person Christ had died in vain. He subverts the only foundation laid in Zion, by mixing those observances of the law of Moses which were typical of Christ and his kingdom, with his satisfaction, as the ground of acceptance with the just and holy God.

In order to recall the Galatians from these errors, he directs their attention in the words just read, to the great and fundamental doctrine of Christ's incarnation and atonement, to its completeness and efficacy, not only in saving us from guilt and condemnation, but in reinstating us in the Divine favour, and bestowing on us inexpressible privileges: admission into his family and the reception of that spirit of adoption which is the spirit of his Son, whereby Christians feel the dispositions and perform the duties of obedient children to their heavenly Father. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons; and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

In these words there are three things that demand our attention:

I. The mission of Jesus Christ, and the manner in which he manifested himself.

II. The design of his mission; "to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

* Printed from the notes of the Hon. Mr. Baron Gurney

III. The fitness of that season which God, in his infinite wisdom, appointed for this purpose: it was in "the fulness of time."

I. In the first place, these words present to our attention the great fact of Christ's mission from the Father, and his appearance in our world. Of the dignity of the person, of our Saviour, as denoted by the expression, "God sent forth his Son," we have sufficient notice in various parts of the New Testament.

The character of Jesus Christ as the Son of God is placed in contrast with the dignity of angelic intelligences, and is asserted in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had himself purged our sins, sat down on the right-hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than they, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." To denote the inexpressible dignity of Jesus Christ, as being one with the Father in his most essential prerogatives and perfections, he is here styled "his Son." The Father gave him birth; he came into the world having existed before it; "he came unto his own, and his own received him not;" even He, that Word which "was with God and was God," and without whom "was not any thing made that was made;" He, the Eternal Word and Son of God, "became flesh:" that is, assumed our nature, "and dwelt among us." His goings forth were from everlasting, and his manifestations among the ancient tribes of Israel not unfrequent. We have reason to believe that those symbolical appearances of God, by which the patriarchs and Moses and the prophets communed with the Most High, were anticipated representations and appearances of Christ. But they were occasional and transient, and in them he wore "the form of God;" but when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son to take up his abode with human nature, to tabernacle among us.

The manner in which this manifestation was made, and the leading circumstances attending it, are marked out in this passage, "he was made of a woman," and "made under the law." Every one must be aware of the peculiarity of the phrase, *made of a woman*, and will no doubt infer from it something peculiar in the circumstances of our Saviour's birth. Accordingly, we find the sacred writers distinctly inform us of the miraculous production of our Lord by the power of the Holy Ghost. Thus the angel saluted the blessed Virgin, "the

Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." In every possible sense Jesus Christ possesses this character. In his pre-existent state he was the Word and the Son of God; in his human nature he bore that relation as being the immediate production of the Almighty; as it is also said of Adam in the genealogy given by St. Luke that *he* was the Son of God.

This particular of our Saviour's existence, as being miraculously conceived by the Holy Ghost, is frequently noticed in the Old and New Testaments, and no doubt possesses great importance in the plan of redemption. Thus when the first transgression entered into the world by the subtlety of Satan, God pronounced this curse upon that apostate spirit, who presented himself under the semblance and form of a serpent, "Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust thou shalt eat all the days of thy life; and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." No satisfactory account can be given of Jesus Christ, who is here plainly prophesied of as the seed of the woman, but in the circumstance alluded to in the passage before us; that is, his miraculous conception, in relation to which he was emphatically and peculiarly made of a woman, standing in a more immediate connexion with that sex than the other. When God was pleased to afford a remarkable and illustrious promise of the appearance of his Son, it was combined with the mention of this particular, "the Lord himself shall give you a sign: behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel," which is interpreted by the evangelist Matthew, "God with us." Again, St. Luke says, "Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph;" plainly intimating that he was not so, but was in reality the immediate production of a Divine power.

In the second chapter of the first epistle to Timothy, notice is taken of the circumstances attending the entrance of sin in the first transgression. When inculcating the duty of silence and submission on the part of the women, and particularly in the church of Christ, he says, "For Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression. Notwithstanding, she shall be saved *in* child-bearing" (as we have it; but it is improperly rendered, and should be *by* child-bearing), "if they continue in faith and charity, and holiness with sobriety." There is no reason to doubt that the true meaning is *by the child-bearing*, referring not to the pains of parturition, but to the extraordinary event of the birth of our Saviour in a miraculous manner. She shall be saved, notwithstanding she was the means of human ruin by admitting the solicitations of Satan, if she continue in the exercise of Christian virtue, and is herself a faithful servant of the Lord God; she shall be saved by the child-bearing, by that signal and miraculous child-bearing

which took place in the birth of the Messiah. The apostle is not adverting to any temporal circumstance; he is speaking of the entrance of sin by means of the woman, and it is natural to throw in a compensatory circumstance, reminding us, that as the inferior sex had been the source of human perversion, so it had the honour, in compensation, of being the immediate instrument of the production of the Messiah, by whom our recovery was effected. And the condition which follows, "if they continue in faith and charity, and holiness with sobriety," puts this interpretation beyond doubt; as there is the greatest connexion between faith and virtue, without which our faith is vain, but none whatever between perseverance in holiness and exemption from the pains of child-birth.

The circumstances of our Saviour's incarnation placed him at an immeasurable distance from all the other parts of the human race. He was the immediate production of God; by his divine power he was conceived of the Holy Ghost, and thereby completely exempted from the taint of original sin, which attaches to all the posterity of Adam. He was the holy thing born of a virgin. He was by constitution placed in the same state as our first parents; he underwent a similar but severer trial, and continued to maintain his innocence against all the assaults of Satan, overcoming his stratagems by his wisdom and sanctity, and his violence by his powers of endurance.

In the next place, it is said he was "made under the law." The term *made* here plainly implies that he was put into a situation different from that which was originally natural to him. Such an expression could not with propriety be used respecting any one who was, by the constitution of his nature and at every period, subject to the law. It is best illustrated by "comparing spiritual things with spiritual," and adverting to the striking passage in the epistle to the Philippians, where St. Paul is inculcating the duty of condescension and lowliness among Christians: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation" (or emptied himself, divested himself of that glory which he had before all worlds), "and took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Here we see Christ is set forth as the greatest example of condescension, in that, though he bore the form of God, yet he took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. These particulars could not have evinced any humility in our Saviour, on the supposition of his having no previous existence, nor a nature higher than human. No person was ever praised for humility in that respect, that he was found in fashion as a man, or appeared as the servant of the Most High: these are the necessary appendages of his condition and existence, quite foreign from his will, and cannot for a moment enter into the consideration of that part of his moral character which respects lowliness of mind. But if we believe, as the Scriptures tell us, that Jesus Christ was "the brightness of the

Father's glory, and the express image of his person," that he "was with God and was God," nothing can set forth his condescension in a more striking point of view than his taking upon him the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Then, indeed, there was room for choice and election respecting his appearance in our world, and that event must have been the effect of his own purpose and the object of his entire complacency. "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil."

The necessary condition of every *creature*, however exalted, is that of submission to the law of God. The obligation of obeying his precepts and of sustaining his penalties in case of the violation of them is inherent, we have the strongest reason to believe, in every finite nature. We cannot dismiss from our minds the connexion between being produced by the Divine Being and being subjected to his law. But here we have presented to us a new and extraordinary spectacle,—that of a person in our nature, who has taken upon him that nature by appearing in the form of man, and thereby *become* subject to the law of God. *He* was "*made* under the law;" whereas all other creatures *are* under it by the very terms of their existence, by the very condition of their nature. He was *made under the law* as really as he was *made of a woman*.

Our Lord was made under the law in every sense. Divines have generally considered that Jesus Christ was made under three laws, or under the law considered in three points of view. First, he was made under the *ceremonial* law, and subject to all its rites and ceremonies. He frequented the synagogue and the temple; he was circumcised the eighth day, and dedicated to the Lord in the usual manner; he was observant in paying the dues of the temple. That homage, from which he was exempt as the Son of God, he submitted to observe, lest the Jews should take offence. In no part of his conduct do we find any accusation from his bitterest enemies of violating the law, except in the single particular of his working miracles on the Sabbath-day, which he justified by showing that "man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath for man," and that "it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath-day." In every other respect he was observant of the law to the very letter, and well might he say to his most inveterate foes, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?"

He was made, also, under the *moral* law, and was observant of all its unchangeable duties. In all his conduct to his Heavenly Father, to his fellow-creatures, and to himself, he was an example of perfect piety, benevolence, and purity. There was, in the whole of his deportment, that which spoke him to be the "Lamb of God," holy, without blemish and without spot. "Such an High-priest became us," was suited to our circumstances, and alone equal to our exigence and danger, who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." In him alone was exhibited a perfect pattern of obedience to the law of God, and thereby he was prepared, in part at least, to be

an oblation for the sins of men. Unless he had been a *spotless*, he could not have been an *acceptable* sacrifice: but as his human nature rendered him an appropriate victim, so also his immaculate purity made him fit in respect of moral quality to be offered up as an expiation to Divine justice.

But, besides this, he was made under the *mediatorial* law,—a more rigid and awful one than any other. For, standing in the stead of sinners, representing their persons, and being exposed to the penalties of a broken law, he endured the wrath of God which was kindled against us, submitted to that death which was denounced against our transgressions, and "by death destroyed death." He came into the world under the necessity of suffering; he came into it principally for the purpose of dying; death was the end of his life, the very design of his being. He came not to reign, but to obey; not to rejoice, but to sorrow; not to live a life of ease and comfort, of dignity and splendour, but of poverty, self-denial, and reproach; and then to expire in agony upon the cross. This was the very object of his appearance in our world, and of this he never lost sight for a moment, amid the highest efforts of miraculous exertion and the loudest applauses of an admiring multitude. "I have a baptism," he says, "to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"

II. Let us observe, in the second place, with what view Jesus Christ was thus "made of a woman," and "made under the law." It was to "redeem them that were under the law, that we may receive the adoption of sons." If we believe that Jesus Christ was that glorious personage who was with the Father before all worlds, that he was his true and proper Son, essentially partaking with him in the perfections of Deity, we shall not admit that he came into the world to accomplish a purpose which could be effected by other means or by an inferior agent. We shall be inclined to assign to him some signal achievement to which the properties of his nature and the elevation of his rank were alone equal. Whatever end could have been accomplished by an inferior person we shall not suppose to be the only design of the incarnation of Christ. For He who doeth nothing in vain, and wasteth no power in carrying his purposes into effect, He who is frugal in the economy of creation, who is frugal in the economy of his providence, would not lavish a superfluity of greatness and glory upon the work of our salvation. If the ends to be attained could have been attained by any inferior instrumentality, those instruments would have been employed. If the Saviour came into the world for no other purpose than that of teaching a true doctrine, it is plain that this could have been done by the agency of men alone. It was done by Moses, who riveted the attachment of the people, from generation to generation, to a burdensome and painful ritual; the prophets sufficiently attested their mission from Heaven, and were regarded by all the pious and thinking part of the Jewish nation with the profoundest deference. If our Saviour, therefore, came into the world to reveal a fact, such as a future life, and exemplify it in his own person, nothing more was necessary

than that he should be a human being. Those, however, who believe that Jesus Christ possessed a higher nature, that he was the Son of God, a Divine person, will admit, of course, that the end of his manifestation could not have been effected at less cost.

This leads us to consider him as the Redeemer. He came not merely to exemplify a rule of life, but to satisfy its violation; he came, not to explain the statutes of Heaven, but to pay the penalty arising from the curse denounced against their transgression. He came essentially to change the moral situation of mankind, to roll away that mass of human guilt which lay, like the stone on our Saviour's grave, entombing all their hopes, and rendering it impossible for them to recover themselves from the condemnation and ruin in which they were involved.

Those who dispute the divinity of Christ act consistently in explaining away his sacrifice and atonement; the two doctrines are inseparably connected, and must stand or fall together. But they who are not so taught, but believe, in deference to apostolic testimony, that Jesus Christ "was with God" and "was God," will admit, with the greatest readiness and gratitude, that he came for the purpose of redemption. And how is this effected? Jesus Christ was made under the law, who was not originally under it, for the purpose of producing that righteousness, and creating that fund of merit in the eyes of an infinitely wise and holy Being, which should be imputed for the benefit of penitent believers, by dying on the cross a death which he never merited; and thus working out a justification from which the spiritual wants of all mankind should be supplied, if they received his testimony and believed on his name. The character in which he appeared was that of a substitute; it was also that of days-man, a person who mediates between two contending parties for the purposes of reconciliation. He alone, being God as well as man, and thus laying his hands on both, was capable of accomplishing this great object; of satisfying the Divine justice, and opening for guilty creatures an approach to the throne of heaven. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." "He was oppressed and he was afflicted;" or, as it is translated by Lowth (and very accurately, in my humble opinion), "it was exacted of him, and he was made answerable." The vicarious nature of Christ's sacrifice, the vicarious character of his appearance on earth, runs through all the statements in the New Testament. It is on this account that our warmest gratitude is challenged, and our strictest obedience required. "The love of Christ," says the apostle, "constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all then were all dead; and that he died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again." "The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many." "He that knew no sin was made sin for us." "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification."

It is undoubtedly for the wisdom of the Divine majesty to determine

whether the law shall take its original course, or receive such a diversion as shall ensure all the objects for which it was designed. It belongs, indeed, to the Divine Being to be just; but if all the ends of justice be obtained by the substitution of another in the place of the offender, shall we impose limits on the decisions of the Almighty, and say that the right of dispensing with a law, as to the exact direction it may take, is not within the prerogative of Him by whom it was made and promulgated?

It belongs to him whose law is offended to determine in what way he will treat the offender; and it is perfectly competent for him to satisfy his own justice by some other method, and to substitute for the death of the criminal the sacrifice and mediation of another, provided all the purposes which could have resulted from the condign punishment of sinners be equally effected.

But believing, as we do, that Jesus Christ is a Divine person, the law of God is magnified by his death; the glory of the Divine character as a holy being, his hatred of sin, his attachment to the law as a law of purity, appear to be greatly enhanced, and recommended to our notice with the highest advantage in consequence of this sublime and astonishing event. If our Saviour was indeed the Son of God, "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person," then, to see him exhibited on the cross, dying under the Divine wrath, and crying in the bitterness of his soul, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" is to behold a more costly offering to Divine justice, a more glorious assertion of the majesty of the law of God, than could have been displayed in the punishment of millions of creatures, or of worlds. Here we see the glory of the Divine character shining forth in a manner the most consistent, harmonious, and consolatory, in the propitiation of Christ. Him hath God "set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God," "that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

He came "to redeem them that were under the law;" and under this comprehensive title is included all mankind; Jews and gentiles, bond and free, learned and unlearned; wherever human nature is diffused transgression is diffused with it; wherever a child of Adam is found there is found one who is under the law; it is a part of his nature, it is a condition of his being, to be born under the law. But as many as are under the law "are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." It is for deliverance from this curse, which extinguishes every ray of hope, and shuts us up to eternal darkness, that we are indebted entirely to the mediation of our blessed Redeemer. He has delivered us "from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."

We have yet to distinguish what is the effect of the Divine appointment, and what is the natural result, in the great transactions connected with the sufferings of Christ. It is the effect of Divine appointment that Jesus Christ became incarnate, that he was made capable of dying

by assuming a frail and finite nature. This is to be resolved solely into the sovereign pleasure of God; no reason can be assigned for it but his infinite mercy, no other explanation given than that "God is love." But when we look at this event in another stage of it, when we consider Jesus Christ as placed under these circumstances, as actually "made of a woman," and "made under the law," by that mysterious union of the Divine and human natures; when we contemplate him as performing what he did perform, and suffering what he did suffer, as *our* substitute and on *our* account,—the necessary consequence is such a vindication of the Divine character, such a display of the holiness and justice of God, that no lower effect could result from it than the justification and acceptance of all penitent believers. Christ could not but merit eternal life, and purchase for us the blessings of a glorious immortality, if we are interested by faith in the benefits of his redemption. The economy of our redemption proceeds entirely from God, but the connexion of its parts is not entirely *arbitrary*. They cohere together *necessarily;* and the sacrifice of Christ is effectual for the salvation of his people, not merely because God chose to annex such a value to it as might have been transferred to the blood of bulls and goats, but because the blood poured forth upon the cross was the blood of his own Son. It is the dignity of the victim which has completely satisfied the justice of the Almighty; and the redundancy of his merits that has procured for us higher blessings than we can either imagine or comprehend.

The apostle speaks with the greatest confidence, in contrasting the vain sacrifices of the law with the inherent sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ. "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God!" "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." He has effected for us, *necessarily*, an entire exemption from all liability to punishment, and procured us a title to the blessedness of heaven, because he was the Son of God; and we are interested in him.

It is said, moreover, that he redeemed them that were under the law, that they "might receive the adoption of sons." The immediate effect of Christ's death is the imputation of his righteousness to the believer, and this righteousness produces an instant acquittal from punishment; but such was the exuberance of his merits, such the dignity of his person, and the high complacency of the Father in his work, that it was worthy of him to bestow on them who were members of his Son greater blessings than those which their first parents had forfeited. It was not merely to relieve from misery that Christ died; it was not only justification that was the fruit of his sufferings; but adoption into the family of heaven, the privileges of sons and daughters for all his believing people. In consequence of being united to Christ by faith and the Spirit, we partake of his peculiar prerogatives; and because he was the Son of God, God has "sent forth the

Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Thus we are "no longer servants, but children, being made nigh to him by the blood of Christ," and raised, we have reason to believe, to a greater height of happiness and glory than we could have aspired to reach had we continued in a state of immaculate purity. Christ has *added* to our original brightness; he has not only redeemed us from the first transgression, but *accumulated* blessings which man, even in innocence, could never have obtained.

"Where sin abounded grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Now every humble believer, every penitent approaching to the sacrifice of the Son of God, when he feels his conscience relieved from a sense of guilt, finds at the same time, through the anointing of the Spirit of God, a peace and joy, a confidence and trust springing up in his mind, which bespeaks a new relation; he approaches the Divine Being in a domestic character; he says, *My* Father! God discloses to him his tenderest compassion, taking him, as it were, to his arms, rejoicing over him, and making him a son and heir of the Most High God. Therefore, henceforth he walks with God as a dear child, an imitator of his perfections, a sharer of the fulness of the glory of his heavenly Father. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God." Such appellations as these it would have been impious to assume, if God himself had not revealed them to us in his Word, such privileges never entered into the contemplation of men in the most exalted state of perfection. God hath "sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father!"

Recollect, that if we are under the law, it is in consequence of not having approached to Christ by faith, and not having received the testimony of God respecting him. Recollect, also, that if we are under the law, we are under the curse: no middle state can be devised; there is no state between a state of condemnation and a state of justification, the legal state, which is one of bondage and fear, and the filial state, which is one of confidence and joy; no medium between that state of distance from God in which he appears as an enemy, and the condition of being adopted into his family and an heir of his kingdom. There is an infinite variety in the human character, there is nothing more mutable than the apparent state of man; but there is an impassable barrier, a fixed line of demarkation, which separates the children of God from the children of the devil. Those who do not receive Christ by faith remain under the law, and are exposed to all its penalties; they live under its curse; at home, abroad, in solitude, in company, in suffering, in joy, in life and death, in every scene of existence, in every variety of condition, the wrath of God, like a dense cloud, hangs over them, replete with all the elements of misery and despair; and it must break upon them sooner or later. It approaches

nearer and nearer: and is only prevented, by the slender thread on which their life depends, from discharging its fury on their devoted heads. Nothing can save but the death of Christ, no other name is given under heaven; this is the object to which the eye of faith must be ever directed,—"the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." Have you looked to Him? Look into yourselves, and you find nothing but matter for despondency; look into your own hearts, and into your own conduct, and your performances will but remind you of the inadequacy and imperfection of your obedience. Know yourselves, and you know only what must minister to despair; but "this is eternal life, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent." If you come to Christ and commune with him, you will find that poverty is exchanged for riches; condemnation for justification; dismay, and fear, and distrust of God, for a firm reliance on his promises, a strong hold on his mercy, and a filial relation to him as your heavenly Father.

We might suppose that, if men believed these truths in any degree, they would all be either rejoicing in Christ's redemption, or earnestly pressing forward to obtain it; that every assembly would be divided into two classes,—those who, having embraced the salvation which is by Christ, find in him the joy and comfort of their lives, and those who, not having found this inestimable treasure, are earnestly desiring to possess it, and sedulously devoted to the search.

But that there should be persons neutral and unconcerned, believing at the same time that the wrath of God is kindled against them, that they are hastening to the Divine tribunal, and that those who die in their sins will sink into destruction, is, indeed, infatuation that wants a name; angels look upon it with unutterable surprise, and their joy is proportionably great when they see one sinner repenting. But if there is joy in the presence of the bright inhabitants of heaven over a converted soul, what should be the joy of those to whom the intelligence of a Saviour is brought, who are invited to partake of the salvation which is prepared for them, and pressed to enter into alliance with God? Hear, then, the proclamation which is made to every one of you: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else!" "Fury is not in me; who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them; I would burn them together: or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace; and he shall make peace with me." "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die?"

These are truths which you have heard from time to time, but they are not on that account less essential to your welfare; for that very reason it is necessary that they should be reiterated, and that the "pure minds" of the most eminent Christians should "be stirred up" by them to fresh diligence and zeal. They are the bread of life, the food of the family of God; all real Christians taste of them, and are

sustained and fitted by them for all the functions and duties of the Christian warfare.

Until you partake of this bread you have no life in you: the spirit is dead, the soul is withered and blasted, torpid and inactive, and lost to God; there is no vital union between you and the Father of Spirits, you are severed from the spring of all felicity, by being in a state of alienation from God. Then you will begin to live indeed, to know the *Divine* life, when you come and taste of the salvation of God, when you cast yourselves on the mercy of the Saviour, and say, "Lord, save, or we perish." Then the mercy of God will be revealed unto you, and you will one day join in singing "a new song, the song of Moses and the Lamb," which none can sing but they who are redeemed from the earth.

III. In the third place, permit me to observe, that we have presented to us, in this passage, the fitness of the season at which Jesus Christ was manifested; it is described as "the fulness of time." It was the fulness of time, because it was the period foretold by the prophets; Jesus Christ appeared exactly at the time predicted by those who "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

It was foretold by Jacob, in his dying moments, that it was to take place before political power departed from Judah. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." Our Saviour appeared at that critical period; the sceptre had recently departed from Judah, the semblance of political power had vanished from the Jewish nation, Herod had reigned for some time, and it was evident, therefore, that He that was to come was at hand.

It was foretold that it was to be during the existence of the second temple. The prophet Haggai thus comforts those who had witnessed the splendours of the first, and mourned over the meanness of the second as compared with that of Solomon: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land: and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts." As if he had said, I can easily accumulate riches far exceeding those which Solomon collected, and which may be lavished by the monarchs of the earth in all the exuberance of their wealth, "the silver and the gold are mine;" but I will bestow on this house a nobler gift, here will I display a costlier treasure, "in this place will I give peace." There Jesus Christ, the great peace-maker, preached the gospel of peace; in that temple he wrought many of his miracles; and in its immediate vicinity, on Mount Calvary, offered himself up for the sins of the world.

It was foretold, moreover, that it should be within "seventy weeks" from the period marked out by Daniel; and though some difficulty

exists as to the mode of computation, yet, on every principle it is plain that they have long since elapsed; and the Jews are, therefore, under the greatest delusion in looking for the Messiah at a future period Indeed, such is the antipathy of the Jews to this prophecy, that it is a popular proverb among them, "Cursed is he that counteth the weeks."

In short, all the characters of time, though they are not very numerous, as they are not equally important with some others, and were probably revealed only for the purpose of uniting the expectations of the Jews to a particular and defined period; all these characters perfectly conspire with the era of Christ's appearance. It was on this account, probably, that such a general expectation existed, when Christ came, of the near approach of some exalted personage. In former times, no one was asked whether he was the Christ; but no sooner had John begun to preach a holy doctrine than the question was put to him, "Art thou the Christ, or do we look for another?" This expectation is noticed by heathen writers as prevailing over great part of the East, but especially in Judea and the surrounding country. It was during a period of the profoundest peace; the temple of Janus was shut, and all nations were kept as in a state of watchful silence, waiting for the appearance of this Divine Person, and with ears open to catch the accents of his "still small voice."

It was also a period of considerable advancement in politics, in legislation, in science and arts, and manners; mankind were in a great degree civilized; learning had long flourished, and the most brilliant geniuses had appeared that had ever adorned the annals of human kind. It was therefore a most favourable time to prevent imposture in matter of fact. It was also an age the farthest removed from that credulity which distinguishes ignorant nations: an age of skepticism, when disbelief of all religion prevailed to a great extent among the learned. The Epicurean doctrine, which maintained the indifference of human actions and the cessation of existence at death, had swallowed up all other sects. The disciples of this philosophy denied a Deity, or asserted such an ideal one as remains in a state of torpor and inactivity, heedless of the concerns of this lower world. No period could be conceived so little adapted to the exhibition of a *false*, and so well calculated to put to the test the merits of a *true* religion. They had wits sharpened by curiosity, so that they would eagerly inquire after whatever was new; but, at the same time, they were disposed to treat with contempt that which pretended to be supernatural. They had long been accustomed to laugh at their own gods; and though they might imagine that there was some safety attached to the ancient superstitions, yet in their private life and expectation, it is evident that they did not in the least connect any serious anticipation of happiness with the worship, or punishment with the neglect, of their deities. The Infinite Wisdom saw fit to select this time to silence for ever the vain babblings of philosophy, to "destroy the wisdom of the wise," and "bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."

It was a most favourable time, inasmuch as it was a period of toleration. Had it been at a later period, when men began to attach that degree of importance to religion which was its due, the infant sect might have been crushed at once. But the Divine Being was pleased to suspend the fury of emperors, and to preserve his people by inspiring some measure of the spirit of toleration in the breasts of those who held the sceptres of this world. Nero's persecution was confined, we have reason to believe, principally to Rome and its environs; and ages passed away before any great attempt was made by the rulers of Rome to put down this new religion.

It cannot be said that Christianity stole on the world like a thief in the night; it cannot be said that it owed its success to the credulity of mankind, and that if the generations among whom it at first appeared had lived now, they would have reasoned to better purpose. For the productions of *that* age are the admiration of *this;* in works of taste and imagination it has never been surpassed, and it is sometimes considered as the highest praise of writers of the present day that they exhibit a near approach to the inimitable beauties of the authors who then flourished. The earth was, therefore, in a state to receive this precious seed; He who appoints the seasons, and brings on seed-time and harvest, saw that this was a proper time in which to plant that tree of righteousness which was to stretch wide its branches till it overshadowed the world, and whose fruit was to be "for the healing of the nations."

The fulness of the time was come: hence we remark that the event here referred to was the most important that had ever distinguished the annals of the world. The epoch will arrive when this world will be thought of as nothing, but as it has furnished a stage for the "manifestation of the Son of God;" when his birth, his death, his resurrection from the dead, his ascension to glory, and his second appearance, events inseparably connected, will concentrate within themselves all the interest of history; when war and peace, and pestilence and famine, and plenty and want, and life and death, will have spent their force, and leave nothing but the result, the permanent, eternal result of Christ's manifestation upon earth; when every other distinction which has marked the individuals or generations of our race shall be swept away, and all shall be alike distinguished in the annals of the universe by the new and awful character of being associated in the same nature with the Son of God. In the effects of this gracious interposition you are all interested; of its fruits you are invited to partake; you may now reject the offer, you may now refuse this great salvation, but the period of neglect will soon be over—you may now think lightly of the Saviour, but these thoughts will soon be ended. The moment you enter eternity you will see things as they are; the greatness of Christ will present itself to your eye, the vastness of his redemption, the importance of his mediatorial work, the infinite felicity of being saved, the unspeakable misery of being lost,—the thoughts of these will dwell with you for ever. Those who now neglect the gospel will never cease to curse the infatuation of putting

away from them the proffered mercy, and judging themselves unworthy of everlasting life. Now, with drowsy attention, with thoughts dissipated amid a crowd of vanities, you hear the record of this great doctrine; you have Christ set forth by his ministers as crucified among you; you hear with listless and careless minds these glad tidings, that "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." But let eternity disclose itself to your view; let a short period be passed either in the enjoyment of the beatific vision of God, or in the dark regions of despair, and how will these subjects then appear?

Eternity will not be too long either to rue that neglect which has plucked down ruin on yourselves, or to rejoice in that grace of God which has made you wise unto salvation. All the happiness, and splendour, and glory which shall then be realized by all the ransomed people of God are so many fruits of the purchase by Christ's death. There is not a single blessing which shall then be enjoyed which is not to be ascribed to the love of Christ in dying for our iniquities, and "washing us from our sins in his own blood."

"What think you of Christ?" The time will come when you *must* think very seriously of him. Some of you, I trust, have thought of him to great and happy effect, have trusted your salvation in his hands, and are "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God." Remember that whatever be the state of your hearts towards him, you *must* stand at his judgment-seat; at his tribunal we *must* all appear to give an account of the reception we have given to his apostles, to his ministers, to the words of eternal life contained in this book. Then those only will have peace and joy who will possess the consciousness that they have embraced Christ; that they have trusted in him in life and in death, have walked in communion with him, kept his precepts, imitated his example, and laid up all their hopes in him, as the Saviour of sinners.

I cannot close without reminding every person present of the awful consequences of remaining under the law. Recollect, wherever you are, that if you are not vital believers in Christ, if you know not what it is to have trusted your souls in his hands, and to be justified by faith in his blood, you are under the law. Rejoice not as others rejoice, you have nothing to do with joy; it would be madness in you to taste of joy till this grand impediment to your happiness is removed. If you are under the curse of God, what have you to do with joy? The joy of a maniac dancing in his chains, the joy of a criminal on his way to execution, is reasonable in comparison with the joy of the man who says, "Soul, take thine ease," while the wrath of God hangs over him, and he knows not how soon it may fall.

Let us, then, all flee to the Saviour; let us, without delay, lay hold of the great atonement; thus shall we "be justified from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses." Christ is ready to receive us; Christ says to every one, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Oh,

"seek ye, then, the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

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## XXI.

## POINTS OF AGREEMENT IN THE STATE OF THE RICH AND THE POOR.*

PROVERBS xxii 2.—*The rich and the poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all.*

[PREACHED AT CAMBRIDGE, SEPTEMBER 20, 1829.]

THIS book consists of a number of short sentences and aphorisms, that relate to human life and manners, and to virtue and vice. It is not necessary for us to attempt to trace any particular connexion between the passage which has just been read and the surrounding context. What was the train of thought by which the inspired writer was conducted from one of these truths to another, it is unnecessary anxiously to inquire. It is obvious there was some law of association which governed his mind, though it eludes every attempt at investigation on our part, and would lead us into a useless and intricate research. The doctrine which is to be deduced from the words you have just heard read is, however, worthy of our most serious regard. It declares there is a natural equality in mankind, notwithstanding the diversified appearances of some of them, and the different stations they are destined to occupy in the present condition of being: it assures us that the rich and the poor meet together, that they coincide and agree in many of the most important circumstances, and that the differences which appear to exist between them are, for the most part, of a superficial, and therefore of a transitory nature. "The Lord is the maker of them all." The sacred writer thus introduces all of us into an equal and common relation to God, who is the great Parent of us all. We are the creatures of the same hand, the subjects of the same government; we occupy the same economy of Divine Providence; and, as to our destination, we all stand in relation to the same future and eternal state of being. These two distinctions and divisions of society have existed in every period. It is impossible to avoid them: and any attempt to establish an equality of possessions in the present world would be replete with disappointment, confusion, rapine, and misery. The greatest disturbances mankind has ever experienced have arisen from abortive attempts of this nature: nor can any one

* Printed from the notes of J. R. Mills, Esq.

seriously consider the causes from which these two conditions of society spring, but he must despair of ever realizing any thing like equality, or any thing approaching to equality, as to the possessions and enjoyments of the present state.

It has been urged in favour of such attempts, and with some degree of plausibility, that a scheme of this kind was executed at the first beginning of Christianity, that the saints at Jerusalem had nothing which they called their own, but threw their property into a common stock; and out of that stock they relieved the distress and poverty of their persecuted brethren. But there is great reason to conclude, as Mosheim* has very judiciously shown, that there was no such thing as community of goods established among them, and that the right of property was not formally relinquished; but that it was customary for all who possessed property to hold themselves in readiness to relieve the exigences of those who applied to them. It does not appear that it was ever hinted at by the apostles themselves, who were at Jerusalem, or made even a temporary law of that church; but every one was left to act agreeably to the dictates of his own mind: and the apostle Peter aggravates the guilt of Ananias and Sapphira, by declaring, that while the estate "was in their own possession, was it not their own; and after it was sold, was it not in their own power:" and that no necessity existed for resorting to falsehood, when they laid the price of it at the feet of the apostle. It never prevailed in any other church. We have no intimation that it was adopted in any other of the great churches which were planted by the apostle Paul; and in his epistles there is no reference to any similar regulation, though he alludes there to a large collection, which Paul and the apostles were engaged in making in those churches, for relieving the distress of the saints of Jerusalem. The pressure of calamity was local and temporary, it was occasioned by peculiar circumstances of time and place, and never pervaded the other parts of Christendom. It never was made a law by the apostle Paul; nor, as a permanent regulation, was it countenanced by the apostles at Jerusalem.

It would be wasting your time to spend more words in pointing out the folly and absurdity of every attempt to equalize the possessions of mankind. I am persuaded there are none here that permit themselves to be deluded by the sophistries of the designing and wicked who propagate this statement. But it is of great importance for us to consider, because it is intimately connected with our duties and prospects, in what great points the rich and poor meet together, and that the Lord is the maker of them all: that each of these respective classes may learn their proper duties to one another, that the poor may learn not to envy and murmur, and the rich not to despise and oppress. Then will society be happy, when the poor and the rich unite in spirit to promote the great purposes of social order and happiness, in entire and equal subjection to the Father of spirits, who is the fountain and source of every good.

* See his "Commentaries on the Affairs of the Christians" (Vidal's translation), vol. i. p. 202, and the reference there made.—Ed

In considering this subject permit me to observe,

I. That the rich and the poor meet together in the participation of a common nature. They are equal sharers in the common nature of humanity, in distinction from those who are in a lower, and from those who are in a higher order of beings. The faculties by which this nature makes itself known are exhibited with equal clearness, and certainty, and activity in both these classes. The poor, as well as the rich, give the most unequivocal indications of the possession of that reason, which is the grand distinction of man, and forms the chief difference between mankind and the beasts that perish. Reason may be cultivated to a higher extent by some of the rich, in consequence of the more improved education which they may procure, and of the leisure which their station commands. But decisive indications of a reasonable nature are presented in the lowest walks of society; and they are sometimes such as greatly to surpass and eclipse the indications of intellect in the higher classes. Every age of society has produced persons who have broken through the difficulties and disadvantages of their station; who have surmounted the obstacles by which they were surrounded, and have reached a high position in a career of virtuous probation, among those who have set out on a more elevated stage. And, on the contrary, among the sons of opulence, some have been found to possess such an imbecility as no education could remedy: their knowledge has never been of any use to them; and the learning which has been bestowed upon them has rather been an encumbrance than an assistance to them: their knowledge has remained a dead mass, which the mind could never animate,—a sort of raw produce, out of which nothing useful or ornamental to society could be extracted. When this imbecility has prevailed to a certain extent, so as to invite a comparison with the degree of knowledge which the mind is capable of attaining, it shows its native disadvantage, and is never more conspicuous than in the case of those who unite a large portion of human attainment with a portion of radical imbecility.

The poor and the rich have equally the power of ascertaining general principles, of forming conclusions as to the future from the consideration of past events, and of rendering their senses conducive to those general and abstract ideas in which all real science and knowledge consist. Thus you see that the poor and the rich, in the great faculty of the understanding, afford proofs of equality; and no difference exists between them but such as may be easily accounted for by the circumstances of human life.

With respect to their moral sensibilities also, the rich and the poor meet together. They possess alike that conscience which "either accuses or excuses," and they possess that cognizance of the purposes and intents of the mind which connects it with a system of legislation, with the hope of reward, or the fear of punishment. The poorest, as well as the richest, is capable of feeling these sentiments. The hopes and the fears of a future world act as powerfully upon the poor as upon the rich; and that legislation which appeals to the conscience, and which refers to the primary distinctions of the human mind between

right and wrong, is calculated to take as much hold of the one as of the other.

In regard, also, to devotion, which by some men of profound thought is declared to be the great characteristic of man, in opposition to the brutes that perish, these two classes meet together. There are many examples among the poor of persons who are "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God has promised to them that love him." In the poorest breast we find the flame of devotion burn; and with an intenseness and purity as great as in those who are more exalted. Though the latter may have some advantages in the greater extent of their knowledge, that deficiency is frequently compensated to the former, by a greater simplicity and unity of attention, and by their entire devotedness to one object. It is a question of much difficulty to determine which of these stations is more favourable to the cultivation of piety, and whether poverty, with all its destitution, is a greater hinderance to the divine life than affluence, with all its temptations. A course of piety is *difficult* for all, but *practicable* for every individual; and the light of eternity alone can decide whose situation has been the most hazardous, and whose the most favourable to the growth of religion.

The rich and the poor meet together in the primary passions of the human mind, which give birth to whatever is most distinguishing in man: and these are found in the same state in the rich and in the poor, essentially considered. The exhibition of them by the latter is more private, giving birth to good purposes; but with regard to the former, the exhibition of them is more public, because they stand in more powerful and exalted stations, and act on a more extended stage. If we trace the passions of men to their primary elements, we shall find the virtues and vices of the poor and of the rich spring from the same sources. The guilty passions that agitate the breast of the peasant, and lead him to disturb the peace of his neighbourhood, are of the same nature with those that disturb the tranquillity of nations in the breasts of princes. The same injustice, the same low ambition, the same love of acquiring that which is not his own, that renders a peasant a nuisance to the village where he resides, renders an unjust prince the terror of his subjects, the source of iniquitous wars, and a stain and reproach to his species. The person who, in the poorest situation, in a peasant's cottage, is led by a love of order, and by native benevolence of mind, to diffuse peace and comfort around his own circle, and, so far as his influence extends, in his own neighbourhood, evinces the same spirit with the individual who would diffuse peace and order through a distracted empire, and who lays the foundation of tranquillity for distant ages, by the enactment of the most wholesome regulations and the most enlightened laws.

The more we analyze actions, and trace them to their primary elements, the more we shall perceive the identity between the rich and the poor, as to their intellectual, moral, accountable, and devotional capacities. The rich and the poor occupy the same department of the universe; they are subjects of the same moral government, and

are destined to be judged equally and impartially, by the same laws, at the final and awful distribution of reward to the just and to the unjust.

II. I would observe, that the rich and the poor meet together in the process of the same social economy, in the same necessary intercourse of human life; they are closely connected with each other, and equally form parts of the same human family. It is impossible for us to say which of these subdivisions of society is, in its place, the most important; which of them ought to be most respected; which of them most cherished. The higher can by no means say to the lower, with truth or propriety, "I have no need of thee;" nor can the lower retort upon the higher, "I have no need of thee." If the lower order occupy the place of the feet and hands, which execute the purposes of the mind, the higher occupy the place of the head, which is the seat of counsel, and is necessary for the direction and preservation of the whole social body. Here we see how necessary both these classes are to the general order, and to the diffusion of peace and happiness throughout the whole. According to the degree in which this is felt, in proportion as the industrious citizen, the ingenious mechanic, or the laborious husbandman who cultivates the soil, in any community, is destitute of encouragement, society languishes; and in proportion to the reasonable, not redundant, remuneration of labour to the industrious classes of the community, is the diffusion of comfort and enjoyment through the whole body.

The higher classes must, on reflection, perceive that they are indebted to the lower for all they enjoy. The distinctions of wealth, and stations of authority, which they are so proud to display, and by which the higher classes are raised above the poor, are supported by the produce of the field and of art; and these are combined by the hand of honest labour, in such processes as the ingenuity of the lower classes has devised. "The king himself is served by the field." The higher classes are supported by the continual machine of labour, which is going on among the inferior classes of society; and were it to stop, it would tend to the stagnation, instead of the steady flow, of luxurious enjoyment among those higher classes. The poor might here, with greater propriety than the rich, adopt the language of an early apologist for Christianity, and say, "Were we to retire from you, you would be astonished at your own desolation; we should leave you little but your temples and your gods."* There may be some

* Mr. Hall here evidently referred to the language of the celebrated Tertullian, *Apologet*, cap. xxxvii. "Hesterni sumus, et vestra omnia implevimus, urbes, insulas, castella, municipia, conciliabula, castra ipsa, tribus, decurias, palatium, senatum, forum. *Sola vobis relinquimus templa.*" There may probably be, as is sometimes conjectured, a little overcharge of rhetorical exaggeration in this; yet, whoever meditates upon the report made by the circumspect and prudent Pliny to the Emperor Trajan (Lib. x. Ep. 97) will perceive that even in his time, at least in the Pontic province, the Christians far outnumbered the heathen worshippers. "Multi omnis ætatis, *omnis ordinis*, utriusque sexus etiam, vocantur in periculum et vocabuntur. Neque civitates tantum, sed vicos etiam atque agros superstitionis istius contagio pervagata est." From what follows it is evident, too, that heathenism had been in great peril, and the temples nearly forsaken:—"*Certè satis constat, propè jam desolata templa cœpisse celebrari*, et sacra solemnia diu intermissa repeti, passim que venire victimas, quarum adhuc rarissimus emptor inveniebatur." This, however, by-the-way; for though it bears upon an important point in the history of Christianity, it falls not within the scope of this sermon.—Ed.

who might not choose to adopt the language of this statement; but it is not too much for the poor to say to the rich. Were they to retire, no mind can adequately portray the lengths and depths of that desolation and misery which would be sustained by all else, but especially by those in the higher walks of life. In vain would they retain wealth if there were no hands to be employed; and were no commodities of any kind presented to them, they would live in a state of destitution greater than the meanest of their dependants, or they must endeavour to apply themselves separately to those arts, each of which, in order to produce in perfection what they value, is the business of a life. The pinnacles of the proudest edifice rest on a basis that comes into immediate contact with the surface of the earth, or is buried partly under it, and is invisible; so, all the improvements of wealth, nay, all the distinctions of royal grandeur, rest on the industry of the poor, upon their silent, unperceived industry, working out of the view, and frequently out of the contemplation, of those who are most indebted to it. Let no one look with contempt on the meanest of his fellow-creatures on account of his having to gain his bread "by the sweat of his brow." That was the appointed lot of our first parents after their fall, and it was the condition of *all* in the primitive state of society. It is to the industry of the lower classes that the distinctions and splendour of the highest are to be entirely ascribed.

On the other hand, let not the poor say to the rich, "we have no need of you." Were they to retire, the effects would be of a very different kind, but they would be equally melancholy. The destruction of the social fabric would be the infallible result. That wisdom which is necessary for the good of the whole is found in persons of exalted station. There is the mind that casts its eye over the whole machine of society, discovers its abuses, and aims to correct them; the mind which watches over the execution of the law gives birth to splendid examples, and refines and embellishes whatever it embraces. It comprehends the order of civil government, and those principles whose operation harmonizes all. These are founded on wisdom, deliberation, and experience, and on the force with which public opinion arms those who are placed in elevated stations. Each of these classes, then, is in its separate place essential to the welfare of society; and the whole has for its basis the industry of the poor. Were all those, who by their leisure are able to cultivate their own minds, to diffuse the knowledge of true morality, and embellish the manners of mankind, by ingrafting new improvements, giving existence to wholesome laws, and seeing them properly executed, what a paradise would the world become!

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These considerations will more than reconcile us to that inequality in the condition of society which for the most part prevails; they will lead us to admire the infinite wisdom of God, who has given birth to those principles which tend to give security and happiness to all, to the poor as well as the rich. By these means society is really united together; so that, while every one is consulting his own interest, he is at

the same time promoting the interest of the whole, even more entirely and effectually than he could have done if he had separately and intentionally devoted himself to it; and each acquires, by the force of his industry, what no compulsory distribution of labour could possibly have secured. You see how admirable is the wisdom displayed in such a constitution of society, as by the union of its parts under the administration of a wise government, renders every individual who acts most agreeably to his own interest at the same time the promoter of the public good. Such a state of society could by no possibility be produced by any technical or mechanical arrangements. The infinite wisdom of God works out this order from the selfish passions of men, and leads each, from a consideration of his own interests in his own station, to operate most effectually for the public benefit. Were those who live in the higher stations of society to lavish all that could be spared from their own expenditure by the most rigid parsimony, and apply it in mere almsgiving, it would be infinitely more injurious than their indulging in even the luxuries of their station: and the proper outlay of their wealth in the conveniences and comforts of life is productive of infinitely more good, and of an order of good more than equivalent to any which an expenditure to the same amount in almsgiving and charity could effect. The rich enjoying with moderation that affluence which God has put into their hands, without allowing their reason to be inflamed with pride and sensuality, and every one enjoying the good things of this life, at the same time preserving the power of meeting the exigences of others, much more contributes to the healthful state of society than the largest distribution of almsgiving, were such an exhibition of enjoyment and wealth to cease: and the poor, while only earning their bread "by the sweat of their brow," lend themselves to the diffusion of happiness and comfort over the whole.

III. We remark that the rich and the poor meet together in the house of God. If there be a place and a time where those sentiments should be suspended, and at which the emotions connected with the operation of riches and poverty, and the conduct to which they give rise, should suffer a temporary pause, the house of God is precisely that place, and the worship of God that time; when the rich should forget they are rich, and where the poor should forget they are poor; where they are called to reflect upon that original equality in which mankind was created. In the presence of the great and good Being they should forget all their distinctions, and recollect their essential relation to Him who is equally the Father of all mankind.

James, when he was addressing the poor and the rich under the influence of Christian principles, says, "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted, but the rich in that he is made low; because, as the flower of the grass, he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth; so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways." The rich man, if he is a Christian, will rejoice in that he is made low; will rejoice in return-

ing to the presence of his God, under a sense of his nothingness, and with a consciousness of meriting nothing: this ought to be the experience of every one who is approaching the footstool of the Divine Majesty. The poor man, on the contrary, delights in being truly exalted. He reflects that he is adopted into that family of which all the saints "in heaven and earth are named;" he rejoices in the presence of the rich, under a sense of spiritual elevation. The rich descends in the presence of the poor into a voluntary humiliation. The one feels the pleasure of descending, while he reflects on his meanness and guilt as a sinner, and lays aside the consideration of all that might have a tendency to lift him up in his own eyes; and the other finds unspeakable consolation in losing sight of his poverty, and in contemplating only the ineffable dignity to which he is exalted as a child of God, a believer in Christ, and an heir of glory. Into the presence of the Divine Being they do not come as rich and poor. It is no part of their business, it is not fit for the occasion on which they are convened. They are convened on common ground, under a deep sense of the necessities of their common nature. Apart from any relations they bear to each other, they prostrate themselves before the infinite God, they deprecate the anger which none can sustain, but which they have equally merited; which is not to be shunned by human arrangements, or by the efforts of human power and influence; they supplicate that mercy which is equally revealed to the rich and to the poor, and which is the only stay and support of a sinking universe. That mercy is divinely free through the sacrifice and blood of the Divine Son. They strengthen themselves for their race, which will terminate, as to all, in an everlasting condition of glory or of wo. In imitation of the holy apostles, they gather fresh grace as they approach Him who is the fountain of grace. They implore the fulfilment of his promises, and the influences of that Spirit who is equally necessary to sanctify the body of the elect of God, to whatever stations they belong, or by whatever variety of fortune they may be distinguished. They look forward to that "new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness," and to those loveliest regions of light and glory where all he distinctions of the present life will be entirely forgotten, where the meanest will have a portion with the most elevated in the favour of God, and "a crown of immortal glory." In this sacred presence all mean and transitory distinctions are lost sight of, are levelled; all mankind feel themselves on one common footing, and prostrate themselves in the presence of Divine Majesty, who is all in all. There "the poor man rejoices in that he is exalted, and the rich in that he is made low."

A very celebrated poet and nobleman, who died some years ago, was in the habit of attending a prayer-meeting in the country village where he lived, and where a few poor people were accustomed to assemble to seek the presence of the Divine Majesty. It was at first customary for these humble persons to make way for him, if he happened to come in a little after the appointed time; but he expressed his unwillingness to receive these marks of attention and respect, and said he should be contented if he were left to occupy the lowest sta-

tion. In other places he claimed for himself, and thought he had a right to claim, the distinctions of his rank; but there he felt himself in the same situation with themselves. In this state of mind he entered into the genuine feelings of Christianity. He delighted to come into the presence of that Being who levels all distinctions; He who smites the proud with a stroke which can never be survived, and has declared his judgment of the humble and contrite in terms which can never be forgotten.

They who cherish other sentiments are forgetful that it is the same Great Being who is the protector of all his poor, and who regards with contempt those who despise others that are permanently afflicted with adverse fortune. In the Divine presence each of these distinctions is alike lost sight of; and all true Christians will at last be brought to feel their relation to one common Father, as heirs of the same inheritance. There is "one faith, one Lord, one baptism, one God and Father of all." They embrace each other as fellow-heirs of the same eternal inheritance. Let us, therefore, enter into the presence of God more under the influence of Christian sentiments. Let the poor forget themselves as poor, and consider themselves as rich in being children of God and heirs of heaven. Let the rich recollect his wealth only as a trust with which he is charged. Let him forget all but his responsibility, and that will constitute a motive to humility in the presence of Almighty God. The utility of divine worship in this case appears most evident. The sentiments which it calls forth are such as hinder our running into the excesses to which we are exposed: and nothing is more salutary or wholesome than that temporary suspension of undue notions of rank, which is derived from an approach to that Being with whom all are on a level, whose majesty fills heaven and earth, and in whose presence nothing can be exalted, except as he draws it towards himself. As I see the time is advancing, I shall not enlarge on these considerations, but advert very briefly to one or two remaining particulars. I will add,

IV. That the rich and the poor meet together in the circumstances of their entrance into this world, and in the circumstances of their exit out of it. We have beheld the identity of human nature, notwithstanding the artificial disguises which these distinctions bestow for a time. Look at the great man in his origin. Look at him as he comes into this world, and say whether you can detect the least difference between the offspring of the peasant and of the prince. They come into the world under marks of the same destitution, and weakness, and misery. Both alike enter with cries expressive of distress, as if conscious of their arrival in a valley of tears. Both would close their eyes in darkness, were it not for the breasts that give them suck, and the knees that sustain them. Both are indebted to that aliment which nature has administered to the mother for the support of her children; and both, by the tenderness excited by their cries and tears, gain access to a mother's care and to a father's heart. The Deity has provided no outward physiognomy to distinguish the rich and the poor: and no inquisitive eye can discover to which of these classes any new-born infant is likely to belong.

Let us here trace the progress of their being farther, until we come to their final exit, and to their departure out of this world. In some of the most important particulars they entirely coincide as to the circumstances of their departure hence. At the moment when they quit this state of being, the poor man lays aside his poverty, the rich man lays aside all the appendages of riches, his grandeur, and dignity; all are alike deposited by the possessor before he passes to the mysterious and eternal bourn. No man goes into the invisible world, no man retires to the sepulchre, without dropping the distinction of riches and poverty. The rich man, it is true, is carried to the tomb by mourners, whether real or artificial; and though survivors endeavour to maintain the distinctions of rank and elevated station in the regions of destruction and mortality, yet all is in vain. They wage a fruitless war with corruption and decay. The inscription first disappears; then the monument moulders into ruin; the dust itself is scattered or mingled with surrounding earth, and the last place that knew the dead "knows him no more for ever." The very names of those who have most disturbed the peace of society, and have been a terror to their species while living, are heard of no more. It is left to the antiquary of a future age to speculate upon the import of the remaining letters that composed a part of their names. Where are the men of genius that lived before the flood? They have retired from the memory of mankind; history records of them only that they lived and that they died, and leaves all the rest to be filled up by conjecture and imagination.

V. This subject reminds us of that period when all the pomp and distinctions of the universe shall coincide in one point, melt into one entire mass, and present themselves in one vision. The time is coming when the rich and the poor will not only meet as to the circumstances of their dying hour, but as to their allotted state and condition of being. We have seen both going to the grave. Alike they occupy the place appointed for all living; alike they seek kindred with corruption, earth, and worms. But they will appear again; and they will appear again for purposes that were never accomplished before. They will appear for the purpose of undergoing a serious review by the Master that created them, who fixed their class, and appointed their station. They will appear to account "for the deeds done in the body." Then it will be found, that many a person has occupied a station which he was not fitted to occupy; that he possessed talents which he was not willing to employ; and that he wore a character which he was not qualified to sustain. Then the Great Governor of the whole will take a review of his creatures; he will recast their parts: he will suffer none to appear but in their proper character; and the distinction of his approbation will in no degree turn on the transient distinctions in their present circumstances as rich and poor. The poor who has been the servant of the Most High will be made rich. No obscurity will be felt, but his lustre will be as the sun shining in his strength. Instead of persecution and oppression, he shall receive "a crown of life that fadeth not away." The rich man who was a despiser of God shall, at the same time,—so far from obtaining

an interest in the favour of the Great Sovereign of the world,—if he looks back on the talents which he has perverted, on the opportunities he has lost, and on the force of his influence which he has not employed for the great ends of his being in serving God, and in serving his generation, he shall curse his wealth, which was the source of crime to himself and others; and will see in it a weight only sinking him lower in perdition.

The rich who have been the persecutors of the children of God will then, in the utmost agony, lament their crime, and will "call upon the rocks and mountains to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb." The purpose for which the Divine Being will then manifest himself is such as it was never attempted to accomplish before,—for *the trial of the actions of men.* As they are now displayed, they can only be judged upon incompetent evidence, and often upon defective principles; but then the whole character will be weighed in the balance: the destiny of every man will be adjusted, and determined for ever. The Divine Being will sit in judgment upon every man, in order to divide mankind into two eternal states; to banish one class to the regions of darkness and despair, and to receive the other to himself; "they shall enter through the gates into the city, and reign with Him and with his Son for ever and ever."

I shall attempt a very brief improvement of this subject, by addressing a few considerations to each of the classes mentioned in the text. Let such as are rich recollect they are rich for the purpose of benefiting their generation, and that they are "the servants of the most high God."—"We are not our own, but are bought with a price;" let us glorify God, whose we are, and whom we are bound to serve. These are the sentiments of every disciple of Christ, but they are not the sentiments of every one who now hears me. There are, probably, some unhappy, miserable men, who are not the disciples of Christ. Let each person estimate himself in the sight of God by this consideration—is he living to himself, or is he living to Christ? Is he living for the purpose of luxurious enjoyment?—he is walking in a vain show, and not discharging his appropriate duty, not considering his riches as the means of doing good, as talents wherewith he is to profit, and which he must occupy till the Master come. He does not consider that they are not his own; he does not use them as one who bears in mind that Divine price by which he has been bought. He has no true respect for that authority under which he acts: nor does he pay allegiance to the only King of kings, and Lord of lords. We must all stand before his tribunal: God himself will be the judge. He has committed all judgment into the hands of that very Jesus who gave himself a ransom for all.

Let such persons consider seriously whether they are living to themselves or to God. Let them consider, that if they are living to themselves they miss the very end of their being; they are committing a mistake which can never be repaired; they are guilty of an error which admits of no correction. They mistake the end of their being, which consists in glorifying God, in acquiring his image, in fulfilling his will, and in laying up treasures in heaven. They commit such an

error as no human folly can equal, such as no human virtue can expiate. This is a condemning error: this is the fatal and awful mistake of men; that they live as their own, while the voice of God, the dictates of conscience, the blood of Christ, the precepts of the Spirit of Truth, and the opening light of eternity, all show that "we are not our own:" they show that we are the creatures of another, the possession of another. Our Lord *will come forth;* he will discover all who have lived to themselves, he will take account of "the quick and the dead; and all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation." Let those who are rich remember that, as Christians, it behooves them who possess riches not to fail in good works. Let them act from Christian principles, and with Christian motives, and with a view to Christian reward. Let them recollect that they are bound to ascertain whether they are Christians. Till we are Christians, we cannot serve God as Christians: we can serve God only in that state which belongs to us. Till we are Christians we cannot pay due regard to his will, we cannot act with a view to his glory, nor according to the instructions of his Word; nor can we seriously expect that eternal life, which rests nowhere but on his promise, which he will fulfil to "all that love his appearing." Let it be the care of all in the presence of God in this assembly that they be Christians; let them secure a portion among the saints; let them see that they have a place among the people of God; that they are united to Him "of whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named." Let them seek to be renewed, regenerated, and sanctified, and washed in the atoning blood of the Saviour, to be made members of Christ, and heirs of his kingdom; to be fitted and prepared for his eternal glory. Let them seek to be vessels of honour, sanctified by the Spirit of God, and fit for the Master's use,—fit to serve him in the lower functions of his temple on earth, and to serve him hereafter in his eternal kingdom and glory. What will it avail any of us to possess now what we must then cease to possess; what we can possess only till we arrive at the threshold of death, and shall look back on the distinctions which must then have vanished; when we lay down our bodies in the grave, and have nothing before us but a vast eternity, the complexion of which will be decided by the will of another,—by the will of that Being who sees not with the eyes of flesh and blood, before whom riches and poverty, wisdom and folly, and all physical distinctions are nothing; who will regard nothing in his creatures but the will to please him, and obedience to that will? The happiness to be obtained by faith will be infinitely superior to the happiness which is derived from the objects of sense. For a man thus to lose his own soul will be to sacrifice the great end of his being.

But there are some here to whom the possession of riches is sanctified, who consider them as a great trust, for the use of which they are responsible, and who are asking. What shall I do? what return shall I make to God for all his benefits? and who tremble, lest at the

final account they should be found unfaithful stewards. They trust in the Saviour: they cultivate communion with God; they condescend to men of low estate; they are rich in good works; they lay up a good foundation for the time to come; they will surmount the perils of the most prosperous fortune; they will combine the riches of this world with the riches of glory; they will be distinguished in both worlds, standing complete and ready for their Master's will; they are armed for the combat in the present state, and fitted at any moment to take wing, to "depart and be with Christ, which is far better." Happy those who, while they have abundance of the things of this world, have also a treasure elsewhere! While they walk in light, and glory, and reputation on earth, they seek first the honour that cometh from above; they seek, indeed, *no higher honour* than that which comes from Him who is the arbiter of all destinies.

Let me now say a word to the poor. If they are poor, and yet partakers of true piety springing from the faith of the gospel, let them not repine. Let them indulge no envious thought at those who possess more of this world's goods than is allotted to themselves. To such I would say, Recollect that your happiness depends not on the station in life which you occupy, but on the manner in which you perform its duties. A small circle is not less complete than a large one: an humble field of occupation, yielding proper fruits in their season, will be recognised by God and approved of men. You will have the testimony of your conscience that "in simplicity, and godly sincerity, you have your conversation in the world." You will leave a testimony behind you of the power of religion: your remains will breathe a sweet odour in all the churches of which you formed a part: you will dignify a low station, you will rescue it from all reproach; for the reproach consists not in poverty, but in yielding to the temptations of poverty. Riches, in themselves, confer no lasting honour, but as they are accompanied by a resistance to their peculiar temptations. You are walking in the footsteps of "the Lord of all," who, when he came into the world, made poverty his abode, became a companion of fishermen, and at length a companion of sinners on the cross. Let such as are poor seek to be "rich in faith:" let them exult and rejoice in the prospect of future happiness: let them rise above the sorrows of time in the contemplation of the glory which awaits them. Your recompense is above; your pleasures are in heaven. If you are real Christians you would not relinquish one portion in heaven for all the happiness of the present state. Avoid every temptation to dishonesty, to prevarication, to envy, to murmuring, to discontent. Avoid all those temptations which arise from a narrow and scanty fortune. Show how religion can dignify the lowest station in society, and do all possible honour to that station. Thousands of saints have done this. Our Saviour illustrated the sorrows and privations of poverty and if you are animated by his spirit, you will walk in his steps; and after having suffered with him here, you will be also glorified together with him, and reign with him for ever and ever.